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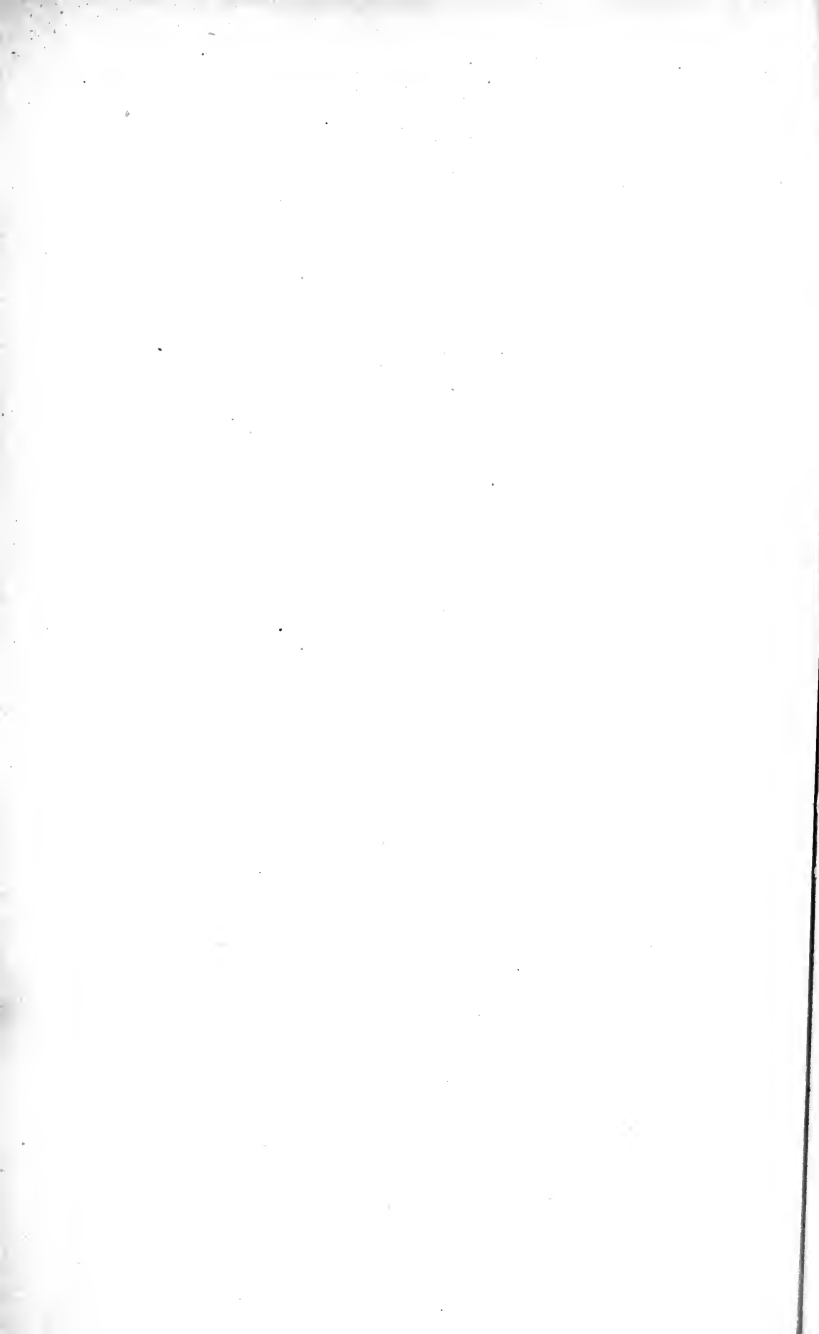
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# MEDITATIONS

ON

THE LIFE, THE TEACHING, AND THE  
PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

*FOR EVERY DAY OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR.*

WITH AN APPENDIX OF MEDITATIONS FOR THE  
FESTIVALS OF VARIOUS SAINTS.

BY

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*TRANSLATED FROM THE LATEST GERMAN EDITION.*

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**† MICHAEL AUGUSTINE,**

*Archbishop of New York.*

**NEW YORK, January 23, 1901.**

## PRAYERS BEFORE AND AFTER MEDITATION.

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### PRAYER BEFORE MEDITATION.

My God, I firmly believe that Thou art here present. I acknowledge that on account of my many sins I am utterly unworthy to appear before Thy sacred countenance. Yet, confiding in Thy infinite goodness and mercy, I venture to address Thee, to call upon Thy holy name, and meditate upon Thy commandments, in order that I may acquire a better knowledge of Thy holy will, and accomplish it with more fidelity. Wherefore enlighten my understanding that I may perceive what I ought to do or leave undone for the promotion of Thy glory and my own salvation; at the same time excite my will, that I may repent with my whole heart of my past sins, and resolve for the future to do all that Thou requirest of me. Grant me above all to know Jesus, my divine Teacher and Guide, more clearly, that I may love Him more dearly, and consequently labor, struggle and suffer with greater generosity and self-sacrifice in imitation of His example. Holy Mary, Mother of God and my Mother, show Jesus to me now, and let me study thy divine Son to the salvation of my soul. Holy Guardian Angel, keep free from me all distracting thoughts; my patron saint, come to my assistance. Amen.

## PRAYER AFTER MEDITATION.

O my God, I give Thee heartfelt thanks for all the graces and all the light Thou hast conferred on me during this meditation. Pardon me all the negligence and the distractions of which I have been guilty, and give me strength to carry out the resolutions that I have made. Fortify me, that from henceforth I may diligently practise this virtue . . . avoid this fault . . . perform this action . . . to Thy honor. Help me to do this, O sweet Virgin Mary; and if I ever forget my good resolution, I entreat my Angel Guardian to recall them to my memory. Amen.

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# MEDITATIONS ON THE LIFE, THE TEACHING, AND THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

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FROM THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST  
TO THE SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT.

*DURING THIS SEASON THE TEACHING AND MIRACLES  
OF OUR LORD WILL FORM THE PRINCIPAL  
SUBJECTS OF MEDITATION.*

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## THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE ADMONITION GIVEN BY OUR LORD TO THE MULTITUDE  
AFTER THEY HAD BEEN MIRACULOUSLY FED.

Represent to yourself the scene depicted in the Gospel for to-day; contemplate in spirit the vast, hungry multitude which Jesus feeds with a few loaves and fishes, satisfying their needs so amply that twelve baskets are filled with the fragments of the meal, after the appetites of all are satisfied. This miracle impressed the people so profoundly that when our Lord departed after thus feeding them, they went in search of Him and gave themselves no rest until they found Him again. Our Lord, however, aware of the reasons which induced them to seek Him, said:

**1st.** "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting." (St. John vi. 27.) Observe, my soul, the reproof conveyed in these words, and see whether it does not apply to you. Our Lord in no wise blames the people for seeking Him thus eagerly; He blames the motive that actuates them in so doing. Listen to the explanation St. Augustine gives of this passage: "You seek Me for the gratification of the flesh, not for the edification of the spirit. But I only fed you with the food of the body in order that, your faith being awakened by the miracle, you might seek the food whereby everlasting life is attained;" the food, as Abbot Rupert says, which imparts the strength necessary to reach the goal, eternal life. The people thought and cared only for the low gratification of the senses; for the higher, supersubstantial food they had no perception. How is it with you, my soul, in this respect? You too seek Jesus; you seek Him in prayer, in divine worship and special practices of devotion; you seek Him by means of the calling you have embraced. That is all very right. But for what reason do you seek Him? Is it not for the most part for the sake of earthly things, and were not the motives that prompted you to seek our Lord in the Priesthood or in the Religious life after all rather of a natural than of a supernatural character? Ask yourself this question seriously, in order that the answer of your conscience may guide you as to the resolutions you will form and thus you may not deserve the censure which our Lord addressed to the Jews.

**2d.** If by the heavenly meat which endureth unto life everlasting, we are to understand Holy Communion to be meant, observe that our Lord says: Labor for the meat, that is, strive to obtain it, and strive to good purpose. These words contain a useful lesson for ourselves. The celestial food is not like the earthly. The latter nourishes equally the indolent and the diligent, the godly and the ungodly, whereas the former, if it is to be eaten aright, to be eaten efficaciously, requires previous labor and exertion. Christ, says St. Paulinus, is the true, living



Bread, the Bread of which it is not given to the slothful laborer to partake; for this Paschal Lamb must be eaten with loins girded, shoes on the feet, a staff in the hand; moreover those who eat it must be standing, not idly sitting at their ease. The most fertilizing rain is of no avail if the ground on which it falls has not previously been tilled. Do your utmost, therefore, my soul, to prepare yourself duly for this celestial aliment; "labor for this meat," and work the works of God before you receive it, as we read in St. John's gospel (vi. 28), works of mortification, alms deeds, prayer and meditation; and you will presently experience more fully the virtue of that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.

**3d.** Consider how the best and most prolonged preparation is not in itself sufficient for the worthy and effectual reception of this heavenly food, without the assistance of divine grace. "Know," thus our Lord speaks to the devout soul in the Imitation, "that thou canst not do enough towards this preparation by the merit of what thou doest, although thou shouldst prepare thyself a whole year altogether, and think of nothing else. It is merely of My goodness and grace that thou art allowed to draw near." (Imit. B. iv. ch. 12.) This grace must be implored of God, and the best manner of imploring it is told us by St. Gertrude in her Revelations: "We ought to address three petitions to Almighty God before approaching Holy Communion. The first is this: I beseech Thee, O my heavenly Father, by the immaculate purity wherewith Mary prepared a fitting dwelling-place for Thy divine Son, that through her intercession my heart may be cleansed from every stain of sin. The second: I beseech Thee, Eternal Father, by the profound humility by which the Virgin-Mother merited to be exalted above all the choirs of angels and saints, that all the deficiencies in me, owing to my negligence, may be supplied. The third: I beseech Thee, most bountiful Father in Heaven, by that inexhaustible charity whereby the Mother of our Saviour was united to God, that of the abundance of Thy grace I may receive a portion." In these three petitions, revealed to

St. Gertrude by the ever-blessed Virgin, the most worthy manner of preparation consists. Meditate upon this, and lay it well to heart.

## MONDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE LORD'S PRAYER.

Represent to yourself the touching scene when the disciples draw nigh to our Lord in familiar confidence, with this petition: "Lord, teach us to pray." (St. Luke xi. 1.) Many a time had they seen their divine Master at prayer, seen Him praying with such rapt devotion, such warmth of fervor that the mere sight of Him moved the soul to its depths, and caused them to desire above all things to learn how to pray of One who Himself understood so well what prayer ought to be. Jesus grants their request and teaches them the Our Father. He Himself repeats it to them; thus the first time that the Our Father ascends from earth to Heaven, it issues from the lips of an incarnate God. Proceed to meditate on the different parts of this prayer, keeping at the same time before your eyes your divine Example.

**1st.** Consider the depth and beauty of the Lord's prayer. The words which compose it are few, yet this prayer, which the Son of God teaches us, is most comprehensive in depth and fulness of meaning. On the one hand it is so clear and simple that every child may learn to repeat it, and on the other, it is so abundant in mystery that it may be used and meditated upon for years without fathoming the abyss of wisdom and spirituality which it contains. When we repeat this prayer we speak to the Father in the words dictated to us by His Son. This fact alone suffices to give potency to our petitions, "for," as St. Chrysostom says, "shall we not more readily find a gracious hearing, if we converse with the Father in the language His Son taught us? That prayer sounds fa-

miliar, not strange to the ear of God, which is couched in His own words." In this prayer man—a needy suppliant for divine aid—for the first time addresses God by the consoling title of Father. Almighty God does, it is true, call Himself by that name in the Old Testament, in His character of Israel's Creator and Preserver, but only in Christ is this name of Father as applied to the Most High really and fully true both as regards God and ourselves, since Jesus, the Son of God, became our Brother through His incarnation, and by our sacramental union with Him we are made members of His mystical body. And as in the second word of this wondrous prayer, Father, we find contained the main, the essential part of our faith, so in the preceding word, Our, lies the gist of the Christian moral code, the law of charity; for if we confess God to be the Father of all men, we must acknowledge all men to be our brethren. And when we proceed to say: Who art in Heaven, we express in these words the expectation of Faith, the reward of charity; we raise the eyes of Christian hope to the regions where our Father dwells, whither the longings of us who are His children tend, the Heaven where He lives and reigns eternally. How wondrously rich in meaning is the introductory clause of this prayer! Let us now consider the several petitions of which it is composed.

**2d.** Hallowed be Thy name. The name of God is in itself holy; but we pray that it may be hallowed in us and by us, by our knowledge of God as Supreme Sanctity becoming ever deeper and truer, by our learning to love Him and extol Him above all things; and we ask this of the Father of all men not only for ourselves but for all our fellow men. How often, my soul, you have repeated the words, Hallowed be Thy name, without thinking of what you were saying. Consider how at the self-same moment, while you who ought to pay great reverence to the name of God in your prayer, are alas! uttering it carelessly and thoughtlessly, this holy name is being dishonored, profaned, blasphemed by thousands wittingly and willingly. At the self-same moment, while you repeat

merely by rote the words: Hallowed be Thy name, how many are appearing before God's judgment-seat who, having lived as heathens upon earth, have never known that name, than which there is none other given unto men whereby we must be saved. (Acts iv. 11.) Think upon these things, and when next you say in your prayers: Hallowed be Thy name, repeat this petition with the threefold intention, first, that the name of God may never be profaned by yourself or by others through impatience or sinful actions, never taken in vain or blasphemed in oaths. In the second place, pray that His holy name may be made known to all, Jews and pagans, Turks and other unbelievers; finally pray that a blessing may rest upon the labors of all who strive to extend the knowledge of that name; and then you will not utter the words: Hallowed be Thy name so carelessly as you have done heretofore.

**3d.** Consider the second petition: Thy kingdom come. We know that God Almighty, King of ages immortal, reigns in honor and glory for ever and ever. (I. Tim. i. 17.) Hence it is not in regard to Him that we are told to pray for the advent of His kingdom. But we pray that His kingdom may come for us, the kingdom promised us by the Father and purchased for us by the Passion of Christ. God has indeed a fourfold kingdom, a fourfold dominion. First there is the dominion which is His as Creator, which extends over the whole universe, over all created things. Secondly He governs all rational creatures, that is, mankind, in the kingdom of grace as their Redeemer and Sanctifier. Thirdly He reigns in an especial manner as the King of Heaven in the realms of the blessed. Finally, after the last judgment God will enter upon that one eternal kingdom, in which He will be all in all, wherein the angels and the elect will rule with Him in eternal glory; and the reprobate, in everlasting torment, will own His sway and the justice of His chastisements. Now there are many who repudiate His authority, who rebel against Him, but then, after the day of judgment, all, Christians and pagans, saints and sin-

ners, will bow down before the Lord of hosts, and of His kingdom, His sceptre, there shall be no end. Think of this, my soul, when you repeat the words: 'Thy kingdom come; and let your earnest petition be that to you and all men His kingdom may come; the kingdom of grace here, the kingdom of glory hereafter.

## **TUESDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.**

### **ON THE THIRD, FOURTH AND FIFTH PETITIONS OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.**

To-day soar aloft in spirit to the realms of eternal bliss in Heaven, and contemplate their happy denizens resplendent with glory, radiant with light. See how they stand around or prostrate themselves before the throne of the divine Majesty, in the most profound recollection, the most fervent devotion, with unspeakable delight adoring and magnifying the great and sovereign God, cherishing no more earnest desire than ever and always to do His will, whose wisdom they behold, whose loving kindness and bounty they experience. And if whilst gazing on this fair sight your soul is kindled within you, if it arouses in you the longing for Heaven, then meditate on these things in prayer, and let the subject of your meditation be the third petition of the Lord's prayer:

**1st.** Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. At the commencement of your mental prayer to-day you placed before you the goal and the reward of your earthly pilgrimage: to join the company of the redeemed in Heaven who enjoy the beatific vision of God. This end can only be attained by doing the will of God, for, as the Apostle tells us, "This is the will of God, your sanctification," and we may add, your eternal blessedness. For of a truth, he who accomplishes the will of God is holy and happy. Ask yourself, my soul, when are your actions

unsanctified, when are you unhappy, miserable, restless? It is when you oppose your will to the will of God, when you transgress the law of God, when you murmur and rebel against the ordinances of God. Wherefore remember when you take this prayer upon your lips, remember that what is asked by it is the chief virtue of the Christian and more particularly of the Religious, namely the renunciation of one's own will and conformity to God's will. But it is not for yourself alone that you ask this; it is for all men upon the earth. Would indeed that the divine will were done on earth as it is in Heaven; earth would then be again a paradise! There would be no more sin, no more of the sad consequences of sin; then the sufferings and trials of this life would be sweet and acceptable to us, because we should recognize in them the will of God. Wherefore implore this grace with all your heart; implore particularly that, if you are a Priest, in your parish, if you are a Religious, in your convent, the will of God may be done as it is in Heaven; pray that the will of God embodied in the Rules and constitutions of your Order, written under divine inspiration, may be faithfully and exactly accomplished by all its members. If this be so, you and your fellow Religious will already have Heaven here on earth, and you can look forward with them to enter one day upon the eternal possession and enjoyment of celestial beatitude.

**2d.** Consider the fourth petition: Give us this day our daily bread. The first three petitions of the Lord's prayer, like the first three commandments of the decalogue, refer to the relations in which man stands towards God. In the fourth the personal needs of the suppliant are brought forward; he asks, as a child might ask his father, for his daily bread in the first place. Man consists of soul and body; hence he has need of a twofold bread, the material bread of the body and the supernatural, supersubstantial Bread of the soul. Therefore before all else we ask, as pilgrims and strangers upon earth, pilgrims on their way to the land where the name of God is for ever hallowed, the will of God at all times accomplished, for the "viati-

cum " to sustain us during this toilsome pilgrimage. We ask, as St. Cyprian says, that our bread, the nourishment which our Lord indicates when He says: "I am the living Bread which came down from heaven" (St. John vi. 51) may be daily given to us in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, in order that we may continually be with Christ and live by Him, and that the defilement of sin may not prevent us from partaking of the supernatural, miraculous Bread of Heaven. Consequently when you pray: Give us this day our daily bread, think primarily of the spiritual signification of this fourth petition of the Lord's prayer—for your interests are not those of the worldling—and consider what your daily bread, the daily bread of a Priest, of a Religious, ought to be. Then ask also for the sustenance of the body, for the bread of earth. Whoever you are, rich or poor, noble or peasant, king or emperor, you must ask God for your daily bread. He alone it is who "giveth to all food in season." Remember how hard many have to work for that daily bread, whilst you, as St. Francis says, going up to the table of the Lord, satisfy your hunger so cheaply and so abundantly; and pray that you, God's mendicant, may no longer ask carelessly and unreflectingly, like the professional beggar, but humbly and gratefully pray: Give us this day our daily bread.

3d. Consider the fifth petition: Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us. In the fourth petition you asked for your daily bread. But what avails it to have bread enough and to spare if your soul languishes in the sickness of sin, of what use is this Bread of Heaven to you? It will be to you death and condemnation if it is eaten in a state of sin. How necessary therefore is the petition we are now considering! For alas! our guilt in the sight of God, the guilt of each day is indeed great. We know that the just man falls seven times. If God is to forgive us, we must also forgive on our part. When in the first part of this petition, in contrition and humility you confess yourself to be a sinner, in the words that follow: as we forgive those

that trespass against us, you pledge yourself by a solemn promise to be reconciled with your brethren in Christ, to live with them in peace and concord. At the same time you pray, according to St. Cyprian, for grace to enable you to fulfil the first commandment of the Christian law, to practise the duty Christian perfection demands of you, to love your enemies, to requite evil with good. O beware lest this petition be your own sentence of damnation! When you repeat it, pray particularly that a spirit of unity and mutual forgiveness may prevail amongst your flock, in your Community; that, as the morning mist vanishes before the sun, so all aversion and rancor may be dispelled from the hearts of those who, reciting the Lord's prayer in common, say: Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us.

## WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE TWO CONCLUDING PETITIONS OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

Let your thoughts dwell for a few moments on the toil some life of man on earth, abounding as it does in sufferings and struggles. He has daily to fight against the enemies of his salvation; he is visited daily by tribulations and afflictions, bodily or spiritual; every one can from his own experience say with holy Job: "The life of man on earth is a warfare" (Job vii. 1), and in truth every one can call himself in the words the Church places on our lips, a poor exiled child of Eve, weeping and mourning in this valley of tears. In the consciousness of our misery we entreat the divine aid, saying:

1st. Lead us not into temptation. God cannot tempt us directly; that is to say, He cannot as the all-holy God incite us to sin, but He permits us to be tempted either to punish us or to try us. Far from wishing to avoid



temptation, we ought in a certain sense to wish for it. We know that our Lord Himself was tempted, that the saints and servants of God who were most dear to Him were vehemently assailed by the tempter, and daily experience shows that the more holy a man is the more he is attacked by the evil one; the more pleasing he is to God, the greater are the temptations he has to withstand. Therefore when we pray: Lead us not into temptation, we mean such temptations as might prove too strong for us. Not through cowardice, O soldier of Christ, do you desire to be spared temptation, but aware of your own weakness and frailty you beg in all humility that your Father will not allow His feeble child to meet with a temptation to which, if he is abandoned by divine grace, he is likely to succumb. As an act of humility therefore repeat the words: Lead us not into temptation, remembering that the Apostle says: "He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall." (I. Cor. x. 12.) And if you see a Brother or a Sister commit a fault, do not judge him or her harshly, but call to mind your own frailty, and pray: Lead us not into temptation; adding to this petition on your own behalf one for the flock committed to your charge.

**2d.** Consider the concluding petition: But deliver us from evil. Amen. **In this** we ask to be delivered from the evil one who tempts us; to be delivered from the evil of sin, which we are tempted to commit; to be delivered, as St. Cyprian says, from all that leads to sin and from all that results from sin. This petition is moreover a supplement to the foregoing ones, or rather it is a summary or compendium of all the rest, for when you pray to be delivered from evil, to be liberated from the snares of sin and of Satan, you actually pray for the removal of the obstacles that impede the sanctification of the name of God, the advent of His kingdom, the accomplishment of His will; that hinder you from receiving worthily the bread He gives, from obtaining forgiveness of sin and the assistance of divine grace, which form the subject of the six preceding petitions. Now temporal evils, as St. Cyprian tells us, are the results of sin. As in the fourth peti-

tion you prayed that you might receive first spiritual blessings and then earthly, so in this you ask for deliverance primarily from spiritual and secondarily from corporal evils. Here observe that Christ does not mention any definite evil. He simply teaches us to pray: Deliver us from evil, because God knows better than we do ourselves what is really evil for us, what really will prove injurious to us. How often you have recited an Our Father for some special intention; God has not, however, granted your prayer. What was the reason? Because you prayed: Deliver us from evil, and the omniscient God knew that precisely this apparent good for which you asked would work your harm, and therefore He denied it to you. He, the all-wise Father, withheld it from the unwise child.

**3d.** Endeavor whilst meditating upon this prayer to view it as a whole and grasp its collective meaning; ponder upon its wondrous depths and the vast meaning comprehended in so small a space. One may repeat this prayer a thousand times without becoming weary of it, any more than one tires of bread to eat. It contains the most beautiful and consolatory truths of the Faith: the fatherly providence of God, the existence of Heaven, the Holy Eucharist, the forgiveness of sin, etc.: all these doctrines are recalled to our mind under the form of prayer. The most exalted moral code is proposed to us; the sanctification of the name of God, the accomplishment of the divine will, the pardon of our enemies, etc., are impressed on us as the duty of the Christian; while all the virtues which it behooves a Priest, a Religious to practise, zeal for God's glory, conformity to His divine will, unceasing efforts to extend His kingdom, continual conflict with temptation, contentment with a scanty supply of daily bread, all these, I say, are contained, implied in this prayer. See therefore that from henceforth you do not repeat this marvellous prayer with so many distractions, such cold indifference as heretofore; let the fruit of your present meditation be that you recite it with the utmost fervor and devotion of spirit.

THURSDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER  
PENTECOST.

ON THREE USEFUL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FOLLOWING OF  
CHRIST.

Jesus, standing on the shores of the lake of Genesareth, is preparing to enter a boat and cross over to the other side, when a certain Scribe comes up to Him, who has seen with amazement the miracles the Lord wrought in Capharnaum and Bethsaida, and listened with admiration to the doctrines the divine Master taught. He now offers himself to Him, proposing to become His scholar, saying: "Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou shalt go." (St. Matt. viii. 19.) Keep in sight the scene here depicted while you consider the lessons to be learnt from it.

1st. According to the opinion of St. Paschasius, the Scribe in question did not desire to follow Jesus with an upright heart. It was because he saw that the blessed Saviour was greatly applauded and much sought after, and thought that the people who crowded to hear Him would in their enthusiasm lay money and offerings at His feet, that he determined to follow Jesus, and as His disciple share the credit and the gains of the great Master. But the Lord, who sees the hidden thoughts of the heart, gave him this unexpected answer: "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." (v. 20.) St. Augustine thus expounds this passage: By these words our Lord intended to say: You come to Me like a sly fox with your crafty calculations, and like a haughty, ambitious bird. You think by following Me to be well provided for, and to build your nest in a high position, but see, the Son of man seeks neither money nor renown, and he who would follow Him must renounce all desire for both. Contempt, not applause, poverty, not riches, is the lot of the disciples of Jesus. You also, my soul, when you entered the Priesthood or the

Religious state, said to Jesus: "Master, I will follow Thee." Ask yourself now if you were not actuated by motives similar to those of the Scribe in following our Lord; ask yourself whether this may not perhaps even be the cause of your discontent, your continual restlessness, and reflect upon what Jesus says to you in the words of the Imitation (B. i. ch. 17): "The habit and the tonsure contribute little; it is a change of manners and an entire mortification of the passions that make a true Religious. He who seeks any other thing than God only and the salvation of his soul, will find nothing but trouble and sorrow. Thou camest here to serve, not to rule; know that thou art called to suffer and to labor, not to be idle and talkative."

**2d.** Consider how immediately after the Scribe another man comes expressing the desire to follow Christ, but he entreats Him: "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." (v. 21.) Our Lord refuses this request, saying: "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their dead." (v. 22.) He who follows Christ enters upon a new life; for him all is dead which he does not take with him into that new life. Hence he ought to leave the burying of the dead to the dead, that is, to those whom he leaves behind in the world of unbelief where grace does not reign, those who are spiritually dead; whilst he makes it his sole concern to progress in the following of Him who, as St. Gregory says, does not inter those who are physically dead, but raises to life those who are spiritually dead. Lay this teaching to heart, my soul. Let not yourself be deterred by what has the appearance of good, for that is what is signified by burying the dead, from following Christ in a perfect and undivided manner, avoiding above all that which is so hurtful to the Priest and still more to the Religious, inordinate affection for one's relatives. Do not mix yourself up in their temporal concerns and circumstances; your heart must belong entirely to God; He will have your undivided affections. How much unrest, how much of detriment to the spiritual life is due to neglect of this teaching. The soul, says St. Basil, is filled with worldly thoughts and becomes indifferent to heavenly things; fervor grows cold, and im-

perceptibly a man returns to the world which he had abandoned. Sit alone—thus St. Bernard exhorts the monk—“forget thy people and thy father’s house, and the King shall greatly desire thy beauty” (Ps. xlv. 12, 13); and then—as we read in the Imitation—“thou wilt have the first perfect relish for God, then likewise wilt thou be well content, whatever befall thee.”

**3d.** Consider the stern reply which our Lord gave to a third individual, who announced his intention of following Him, but wanted first to take leave of those who were at his house: “No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” (St. Luke ix. 62.) With what terror this answer ought to inspire those Religious who, called to follow Christ, after they have already put their hand to the plough, that is, have begun to follow the evangelical counsels, look back, i.e., entangle themselves again in worldly business, dwell in thought and desire still in the world they have left, and continually cherish the wish to return thither, ostensibly to take leave of it, but really to cling more closely to that which they ought to hate for Christ’s sake. What would happen if you were actually to return to the world after having abandoned it? If, exclaims St. Theophylact, the young man in the Gospel was not permitted even to go and bury his father, woe betide the Religious who returns altogether to the world! If temptations of this nature assail you, if they rest, as in the case of the young man, on apparently good grounds, such as for the sake of supporting your parents, your relatives, reflect upon what we are told in the annals of the Franciscan Order: A monk who was assailed by the temptation to return to secular life on account of his mother being reduced to poverty, cast himself on his knees before the crucifix, and said: “I will not forsake Thee, O Lord, I only want to assist my poor mother.” When he had spoken these words, his eyes fixed upon the crucifix, he saw blood trickling from the hands and feet of the figure, and he heard a voice saying to him: “Thou hast cost Me far more than thou didst ever cost thy mother, for I redeemed thee with My own blood.

Therefore thou oughtest not to abandon Me for her sake."

## FRIDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE CONTEMPT OF THE WORLD WHICH OUR LORD'S PASSION TEACHES US.

To follow Christ with entire surrender of self and undivided affection, with complete detachment from creatures and perfect contempt of the world, was the lesson to be learnt from yesterday's meditation. Yet simple as this lesson is, it is strongly opposed to our fallen nature. Wherefore listen to-day to the voice of another preacher of this same truth; take your stand before the cross whereon your Saviour hangs, bleeding, expiring, and understand how in His Passion He preaches to you contempt of the world.

**1st.** Consider that our Lord upon the cross shows His contempt for the world inasmuch as He treads under foot all the pleasures of the world. That which causes our heart to cling to the world is our carnal nature, and the gratification which the world affords to the flesh. Now contemplate your Lord upon the cross, and see how relentlessly He wages war upon the flesh, that mighty foe of mankind, a foe so powerful as to overcome Samson, the strongest of men, and Solomon, the wisest of sages. This foe Christ pursues to his most secret hiding-places; He allows him no other couch than the hard wood of the cross, no other pillow than a crown bristling with thorns; nothing to please the palate but vinegar and gall, nothing to enchant the ear but shouts of scorn and derision. Learn hence, O carnal man, how you ought to treat your flesh, your greatest, most formidable adversary. Alas! how differently you act! How soft is your couch, how liberal your table! How eager you are for pleasures

and how averse to all pain! Yet you complain of your hard struggles with your rebel nature. Blame yourself for this, not your enemy.

**2d.** Consider how Jesus upon the cross shows His contempt for the world inasmuch as He treads under foot worldly honors and renown. See how He, the sovereign Lord of Heaven and earth, has no throne but a gallows, the cross of shame; no crown but a circlet of thorns from the wayside, no sceptre but a hollow reed, no signet-ring but the wounds in His bleeding hands, no royal mantle but a ragged purple robe, stained with gore; no retinue but two highway robbers crucified beside Him. Such is the regal state of the King of kings, and you, His creature, a criminal who but for God's grace would be condemned to hell, you desire ever to inhale the incense of the world's adulation, of earthly fame. Your rank is too low to please you, your calling too humble, your position too insignificant; your worth is not recognized as it should be. O the vanity of the human heart! Look at the cross, O man, and learn of Jesus to despise the world in this respect also. Reflect a moment: Every one who seeks his own glory is no better than a common thief. For what does his glory consist in? Physical or intellectual superiority, the possession of the good things of earth or the gifts of Heaven? But all that comes from God, therefore to Him alone the glory is due, and if you take it to yourself you rob God.

**3d.** Consider how Jesus upon the cross preaches contempt of the world by His extreme poverty. So thoroughly did He despise the possessions, the riches which are the bonds that attach the heart to the world, that He departs out of the world in a state of destitution unequalled before or after. He to whom belong the heavens and the earth, expires, expires bare and naked, whereas the poorest beggar is not without a shroud. He expires upon a gallows, whereas the most wretched of mortals has at least a bed of straw at the hour of death. He expires, and in His last agony no one moistens His parched lips with a drop of water, an alleviation not denied to the meanest

criminal. He expires, and is laid in the sepulchre of a stranger, for He does not own the few feet of earth required for a grave. Look, my soul, in this mirror. You who are a Priest daily hold in your hands Jesus, the model of poverty; you hold Him in hands that count gold so covetously, hands that are "so sparing in giving, so tenacious in retaining." You are a Religious, you have pledged yourself to follow the Saviour in His poverty; supposing that you were to die now, what would your dying-bed be compared with that on which your Lord expired, your poverty at the hour of death compared to that of your Saviour when He breathed His last upon the cross? Ask yourself this, and according to the result of the comparison form your resolutions for the future.

## SATURDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE PAINS OF HELL.

Imagine that you see before you your Lord upon the cross; that you see Him hanging there in His awful dereliction, in darkness, tortured by burning thirst, in the company of two thieves, mocked, blasphemed, racked with agonizing pain. Sin, our sin, is chastised in His person. If the innocent suffer in this manner on account of sin, what will be the punishment of the guilty, of the damned in hell? We know but little about hell, yet that which our crucified Lord proclaims to us concerning the pains of hell suffices to inspire us with a salutary terror.

1st. Consider in the first place the pains our Lord suffered on the cross. In reference to Him the Psalmist says: "The sorrows of hell encompassed Me." (Ps. xvii. 6.) From this it may be assumed that He suffered the sorrows of hell. Let your thoughts dwell for a time, my soul, on those pains. Endeavor to realize the fevered burning of the wounds inflicted by the scourges, the pain



caused by the piercing of the thorns that composed His crown, the indescribable torture like that of fire in His transfixed hands and feet, the consuming thirst that He suffered, with nothing to quench that thirst but vinegar; think, I say, of all this, and you will have some idea of the pains of hell. But the conception you form is only an approximate image of the torments of hell, for, be it observed, the sorrows of hell which encompassed Jesus lasted three hours, whereas those of the damned are everlasting; the sorrows of hell which encompassed Jesus only burnt like fire, whereas those of the damned are a perpetual, a consuming fire; the tormenting thirst which Jesus endured in the furnace of suffering was allayed by vinegar, whereas the damned, who are cast into the pool burning with fire and brimstone, cannot so much as dip the tip of their finger into water, to cool their parched tongue. Listen then, O my soul, to Him who preaches from the cross, and be not so foolish as to suffer this eternal pain for the sake of a short-lived carnal gratification.

**2d.** Consider the ignominy our Lord endured upon the cross. Christ, who descended from His throne in Heaven, who from all eternity had reigned in uninterrupted glory and celestial majesty, now hangs upon the gallows, the cross, like a common malefactor, between two thieves, in the place of execution, the place of a skull. Hear how His last moments are embittered by the derision, the biting sarcasms of the Scribes and Pharisees; nay how even the thief on His left, a low assassin, pours out upon Him, the King of glory, a flood of taunts and abuse. If God avenged sin so relentlessly in the person of One who was innocent, what, think you, will be the magnitude of the chastisement inflicted on the reprobate in hell! How deep will be their fall into that abyss! They will remain immersed in the pool of brimstone not for three hours only, but for ever and ever, in the company of the lowest, most depraved and abandoned criminals; horrible curses and blasphemies, the despairing lamentations and imprecations of the damned will resound continually in their ears, and their eyes will rest, not as did those of our cru-

cified Lord, on devils in human form, but on the devils themselves in all their naked hideousness and malice. If the demons treated the Holiest of the holy with such barbarity, what will be their treatment of the damned? Listen then, my soul, to Him who from the cross preaches to you to-day on the pains of hell, and be not so foolish as to allow yourself to deem intolerable the loneliness of your life as a Priest or Religious, the contempt in which your calling is held, or you will find yourself compelled to endure the companionship of the lost, the mockery of hell for ever and ever.

**3d.** Consider how our Lord hung upon the cross in unnatural darkness and in utter dereliction. Hear His agonized cry, the sorrowful, heartrending accents that resound through the awful gloom that envelops the cross: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Alas! it is sin that encompasses the innocent Victim with these sorrows. What is there in store for the guilty, for the reprobate? It is not merely a three-hour eclipse, a temporary withdrawal of the sun's light that surrounds the lost, but the blackness of darkness for ever. They do not only feel as if forsaken by God; they are forsaken by Him, and that not for a few minutes only, not even for millions and eons of years, but for eternity. Grasp this thought: to be for ever in the abyss of hell, in impenetrable obscurity and complete separation from God, a prey to remorse, despair and desolation—of a truth, if there were no other sorrows to enumerate, this alone would be enough to make you embrace the cross from which you learn these truths, to pledge yourself solemnly from henceforward to fulfil cheerfully all the duties your state of life lays upon you; and instead of murmuring, to rejoice and give thanks to God for having led you to enter into a state in which you have greater facilities than elsewhere for escaping the pains of hell. Yet remember this: The pains of hell are terrible for those who live in the world, but they are doubly terrible for Priests and Religious.

## THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE DAY.

Place before your eyes the divine Teacher, dispensing the Bread of Life to the attentive multitude. Amongst many other truths new to His hearers, equally deep in meaning and profitable to salvation, He addresses to them this admonition conveyed in the solemn words taken from the Gospel for the day: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the covering of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. By their fruits you shall know them." (St. Matt. vii. 15, 16.)

1st. Consider that our Lord, speaking of the false prophets, those men, that is, who seek to mislead Christian people in matters pertaining to faith and morals, tells us three things concerning them: First, that they outwardly bear the semblance of sheep; secondly, that they are inwardly "ravening wolves," and thirdly, that in spite of all their hypocrisy and dissimulation they may yet be known by their fruits. Consider, my soul, in your meditation these three points in succession, that false prophets at all times and in all places make their appearance under the guise of sheep; that is to say, they outwardly simulate the simplicity and innocence of a lamb, they overflow apparently with meekness, patience, charity, and the like virtues, whilst in reality they resemble ravening wolves, their hearts being full of hatred, dissension, pride and covetousness; and like wolves they are ever on the watch to destroy your innocence, your faith, your peace of mind. Outwardly a sheep, inwardly a wolf, that is their distinctive mark. Yet however thick the sheepskin in which they wrap themselves may be, one thing infallibly reveals their true nature, and that is their fruits. Therefore, my soul, before you place confidence in one who calls himself a "prophet," look first what are the fruits of his

teaching, of his guidance, and before you act upon the principles he lays down for you, ascertain first what are the practical fruits produced in daily life by his teaching, his maxims, and you will then be safe against deception. For you know that the Apostle in his Epistle to the Galatians (ch. v.) enumerates for your instruction the fruits of the evil as well as of the good tree, in the following passage: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, luxury, idolatry, witchcraft, wraths, quarrels, dissensions, sects, envies, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. But the fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continence, and chastity." Where you doubt, my soul, apply this test the Apostle gives you.

2d. Consider our Lord's words: "By their fruits you shall know them" in regard to yourself, and ask yourself whether your tree produces the good or the evil fruits specified in the words we have quoted. Where are the fruits, the good fruits, which do not consist in the applause and favor of those around you, but in the improvement of your life? Perhaps after all, the tree is not a good one; after all, its root will be found to be eaten away by ambition and self-love; the worm of vanity and jealousy will have gnawed out the heart of fruits otherwise good and sound. Or you may be placed in the garden of a holy Order. Many fine trees stand and in time past have stood therein laden with numerous and excellent fruits! And if your tree, standing amongst them, is almost destitute of fruit, or produces only sour and worm-eaten ones, what is the reason of this? Is not every tree equally well watered, equally well tended? Do not all the trees alike enjoy the same sunshine, the same dew of divine grace? Do you receive Holy Communion less often, have you fewer opportunities of spiritual profit than your fellow Religious? Surely not. Alas! we can only conclude that you are not a good tree. Examine yourself seriously on this point, and see that this very day by the use of the sacraments you cease to be a "wild" tree, be-

ing "grafted" into the good tree, and the result will be apparent in the excellent fruit you will bear.

3d. Consider our Lord's closing words: "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and shall be cast into the fire." (St. Matt. vii. 19.) You may perhaps at present stand a stately tree in the garden of the Lord, occupying the best situation, your foliage thick and luxuriant—the honors and pleasures you enjoy—but what does all this profit you? Sooner or later Death will come and cut down the proud tree, and the Judge, finding no fruit upon it, will cast it into everlasting fire. Impress this truth deeply upon your heart, and take serious, definite resolutions; form for yourself, so to speak, a plan of campaign; determine how you will act from henceforth with the result of producing fruit, good fruit; and with this end in view follow the counsel which an eminent master of the spiritual life gave to his disciples: He told them that the famous painter Apelles never allowed a single day to pass without painting something; however engrossed he was with business, he put it aside with this accustomed apology: "I have not taken my brush in my hand to-day." Thus he became a great artist. Now let not us, my soul, permit a day to pass without having put our hand to the work, without having made some progress in virtue, in mortification. Do this, and when you retire to rest at night ask yourself always what has been the fruit of the past day.

## MONDAY AFTER THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE HEALING OF THE TWO MEN POSSESSED WITH DEVILS.

Gadara, the city of the Gerasens, is situated to the southeast of the sea of Genesareth, on an eminence, at the foot of which hot springs rise. In the contiguous mountains there were a great many caverns hollowed out of the rock, the sepulchres of bygone generations, and those dismal abodes of darkness and death were the resort of two men who were possessed with devils, and who were so "exceeding fierce that none could pass **by** that way." (St. Matt. viii. 28.) One Individual, however, Christ Jesus, had no occasion to fear their fury, for He was more powerful than all the legion of devils by whom these two Gerasens were possessed. Imagine that you see our Lord as He draws near to the spot that was regarded with such horror, and to the unhappy maniacs.

**1st.** Consider first the place where the two men possessed with devils dwelt. It was a place of sepulture, on the declivity of a mountain, in the vicinity of a meadow, where large herds of swine, belonging to the Gerasens, were feeding. Thus Satan delights to tarry in the place of death, spiritual death, which is sin; and there are three kinds of sin in particular in the company of which the devil finds his chief delight, three sins which are indicated to us by the description of the locality, for the mountains are symbolical of the proud, the pasture-land of the avaricious, and the herds of swine feeding there of the unchaste. The pride of life, the concupiscence of the eyes, the concupiscence of the flesh, these are the true offspring of the devil; where they dwell and where they rule, there he loves above all to dwell, there he reigns supreme. Reflect seriously on this, my soul. You feel compassion for the unhappy men who are possessed; the torment, the

unrest of their condition excites your pity. But perhaps you may be in the same deplorable state of disquiet and restlessness, driven about and tormented by the demon of pride which renders you as much to be shunned by your fellow men as the two who were possessed were by the Gerasens; or you may be dominated by the demon of concupiscence, concupiscence of the eyes or of the flesh, and may dwell, may have long dwelt, like those men whom you commiserate, in the place of sepulture, of spiritual death, amongst the graves where the graces of your state, your peace of mind lie buried. O hasten this very day to Jesus, who alone can rescue you, and pray for those of your fellow Religious, of your fellow Christians, who are now exactly in the condition of these unfortunate Gerasens.

2d. Consider the malice of the devils. They knew, they had a presentiment that the mighty God of Israel would drive them out of what had till then been their abode, and therefore they besought the Lord to permit them to enter into the herd of swine. As they could no longer do any harm to the bodies of the Gerasens, they would at least do their utmost to injure their property. Besides they thus argued: If the herds belonging to the inhabitants are destroyed, these covetous people, embittered by the loss they have sustained, will no longer vouchsafe a hearing to Him who comes to proclaim to them the Gospel of salvation. Behold, my soul, the malice and craft of these fallen spirits, and consider that as God in His whole being is charity, so the devil's whole being is one of hatred; and while God is only concerned in manifesting to us His fatherly loving kindness, so the devil is wholly set upon our perdition. Wherever he possibly can he does us harm. With the delight of hell he heaps misfortunes on those who are beloved of God, in as far as the Most High in His wisdom gives him liberty to do so. What calamities, what misery he brought upon holy Job; how terribly the saints have suffered from his demoniacal assaults! Think of this malice and hatred of the evil one in order to conceive a thorough and radical abhorrence of him; but at the same time bear in mind that Satan is only able to molest the

children of God to the extent that God sees right, and he cannot prevail against them as long as they resist his assaults. Stand steadfast therefore in the conflict with the devil, and beware especially lest in seasons of temporal affliction, loss, sickness, you further his designs by murmuring, impatience and irritation.

**3d.** Consider the conduct of the Gerasens. Apart from the great benefit which our Lord had conferred on their two fellow countrymen by driving out the devils, He had consented to the appalling spectacle of the destruction of the herds of swine, for the purpose of giving evidence to the Gerasens on the one hand of His gracious and merciful power to heal and save, which He had exercised on behalf of the two who were possessed, and on the other hand to reveal to them, in a manner which they would feel, the malice of the spirits of hell and their delight in the work of destruction. Both of these things ought to have been a motive with the Gerasens, urging them to seek salvation from Him who had shown Himself to possess such irresistible power over the spirits of evil. But what was the effect of what had occurred? They did indeed fear the omnipotent Judge who brought condign punishment upon their unlawful avarice, the Jews being forbidden to eat the flesh of swine, but His presence aroused in them no better sentiment; they were too deeply immersed in the pursuit of material interests to rise to the height of loving Him, and eagerly accepting the salvation He offered them. The Evangelist tells us "the whole city went out to meet Jesus, and when they saw Him, they besought Him that He would depart from their coasts." (v. 34.) What a sad, what an awful request! Dwell in thought, my soul, on this depth of human depravity. The loss of their swine is a far greater calamity in their eyes than the loss of God. The creature is more to them than the Creator. They care more for the flesh of swine than for the Bread of Life. Unhappy Gerasens! Yet ask yourself, my soul, do you not do much the same as they did? They besought the Lord that He would depart from them, but you do more; by your grievous sins you drive Him away roughly and cruelly.



**TUESDAY AFTER THE SEVENTH SUNDAY  
AFTER PENTECOST.**

**ON THE CALL OF MATTHEW.**

By the lake of Genesareth, at the landing-place of the boats, and the cross-roads where the highways met, there was a custom-house and in that custom-house there sat a publican, named Matthew. Imagine that you see him at the moment when our Lord, passing by, cast upon him one of those looks which went to the inmost heart, which converted Magdalen and awoke in Peter the deepest contrition. And when you have placed this scene vividly before your eyes, proceed to meditate upon the following points:

**1st.** The grace of a vocation, which was conferred upon the apostle. Matthew was sitting at the receipt of custom. He was sitting, St. Chrysologus remarks, to indicate that he was heavily laden with the burden of insatiable covetousness, and depressed by the reproaches of his conscience; and, to quote the beautiful words of St. Chrysostom, the irresistible voice of the Redeemer calling him summons this man from the greedy pursuit of worldly gain to follow Him. O gracious call, which so suddenly, so instantaneously transforms a sinner into a just man, a despised publican into an illustrious apostle, an avaricious worldling into an evangelist who treads the world under foot. The charity of the Redeemer, manifested in the gracious vocation of this sinful publican, awakens your astonishment and your admiration; but remember, my soul, that our Lord bestowed the same grace upon you. He called you also from the custom-house of secular life to be His disciple in the state of Holy Orders or in the Religious life. Do not underrate the grace of this vocation. "What shall I render to Thee for this favor?" exclaims the great ascetic, "For it is not given to all that, forsaking all things, they should leave the world and em-

brace the monastic life." This privilege has been bestowed on you. Now ask yourself do you consider it as a privilege or do you find it somewhat of a burden?

**2d.** Consider the prompt obedience of him who was called. Immediately upon hearing the one word: "Follow Me," the publican rises up, leaving the custom-house, his means of livelihood, his account-books, all the money and other property he possesses, and hastens to follow Him who had nothing of His own. Thus, St. Chrysostom observes, in one and the same incident we behold both the miraculous effect of the all-conquering charity of God, and an example of humble, unquestioning docility in the person of the man who was called. May this apostle also be a model to you; may you learn of him to obey instantly, without hesitation and without delay, when our Lord, either by His secret inspirations or by the voice of your Superior, bids you perform this good work, make that sacrifice, avoid certain occasions of sin. The monk is known by his obedience; the good monk, the good Christian, by his prompt obedience. "One who is truly obedient," says St. Bernard, "never hesitates. He abhors postponement, dilatoriness is unknown to him, he anticipates eagerly the orders given to him. His eyes are always ready to see, his ears to hear, his tongue to speak, his hands to work, his feet to run, in execution of the command of his Superior; he summons all his faculties in order to accomplish the will of his Superior as perfectly as possible." You will do well, my soul, to look into the mirror of obedience which St. Bernard here holds up before you.

**3d.** Consider the joyful gratitude displayed by him whom our Lord called. In the gladness of his heart he prepares a great feast, celebrating the close of his former life and the commencement of his new life by a festive entertainment in honor of his Master, to testify, as St. Augustine remarks, his gratitude towards Him. And it is this joyous thankfulness on the part of the converted sinner that determines Jesus willingly to accept his invitation. Do you therefore, my soul, prepare a like feast for your Lord. Show yourself truly thankful, thankful and

joyful in return for your vocation to the service of God. Be cheerful; God does not like to see His servants with gloomy faces. He does not regard with complacency those who serve Him with sadness, discontent, reluctance of heart. St. Francis did not like to see his monks look sad; he wished all the members of his Order to have a cheerful and joyous air, because he regarded joy as one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, and as a token of the indwelling of God's grace in their soul. "A secure mind is like a constant feast," we are told in the Proverbs (ch. xv. 15); let the resolution you form to-day as a thanksgiving for the grace of your vocation be to prepare a feast for our Lord by the prompt and cheerful fulfilment of the duties of your calling.

## WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE HEALING OF THE WOMAN WITH THE ISSUE OF BLOOD.

Represent to yourself, my soul, how, while Jesus, surrounded by a vast multitude of the people, was proceeding to the house of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, in order to raise his little daughter to life, a heathen woman, suffering from an obstinate malady, endeavored to approach the heavenly Physician. Partly animated by a confident hope of cure, partly restrained by a secret timidity and bashfulness, with difficulty she edges her way through the crowd, nor will she desist until she has accomplished her purpose of touching the hem of His garment. This woman is a type of the spiritually sick, who draw near to the heavenly Physician with similar confidence in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

1st. Consider the hopeless condition of the woman. For twelve years she had been troubled with an issue of blood. Many physicians had tried their skill upon her,

she had spent her substance on different remedies, but all was in vain; she was nothing better, but rather worse. There is only one who can heal that poor woman, and that one is Jesus. Thus this poor diseased woman represents to us those unhappy souls who have a natural tendency to what is evil, who are enslaved by various passions, bad proclivities, propensity to sin. How much such persons have to suffer! They do indeed desire to tame their rebel nature, they strive to master their bad tendencies, they take trouble and fight hard, they try many means of cure, they have recourse to spiritual physicians, to confessors, they seek to find a cure in almsdeeds, austerities, mortifications, but all is in vain. What is to be done? Must they give up hope? Oh no, there is still one who can help them; it is Jesus, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Prostrate before the tabernacle, let them not weary of prayers and entreaties; let them, like the woman in the Gospel, "touch the hem of His garment," the garment of the sacramental species beneath which His sacred body is concealed, and they shall be made whole. The frequent reception of this spiritual medicine, provided it be received worthily, the earnest prayer of faith sent up to the heavenly Physician will change the worst nature and heal the soul even if it has been sick for long years without hope of cure. But you will perhaps say: "This remedy does not cure me." There is something more to be considered on this point.

**2d.** Consider with what humble zeal and childlike confidence the sick woman sought for help. She came behind our Lord, saying within herself: "If I shall only touch His garment, I shall be whole." (St. Matt. ix. 21.) Think first of all, with what difficulty the woman makes her way through the crowd, with what perseverance and assiduity she tries every means of cure, and how she embraces the earliest opportunity of applying to our Lord for help. Then consider how the zeal this woman displays is coupled with touching humility. Her malady renders her legally unclean; she knows this and therefore humbly and modestly only approaches our Lord from be-

hind, without allowing herself to be seen. She contents herself with touching the hem of His garment; she does not venture to appear before His face and beseech Him to heal her. And yet this humility is on the other hand accompanied by such uncommon faith and confidence that our Lord Himself pays to it a tribute of admiration: "Thy faith," He says, "hath made thee whole." (v. 22.) And now ask yourself, my soul, whether it is with similar dispositions that you draw near to the heavenly Physician in the adorable Sacrament of the Altar? Are you animated by the same eager desire, the same solicitude for the cure of your diseased nature, so that you omit no opportunity of applying to your Lord for healing, and do you go to the heavenly Physician with the same reverent humility, the same truthful, filial confidence as did that heathen woman? Oh confess it to yourself, you did of a truth ask our Lord to make you whole, but not with the same dispositions, and therefore this medicine, otherwise so salutary in its effects, does not benefit you. I say this salutary medicine, and with justice, for in the next point

**3d.** Consider what virtue the sacred body of our Lord must possess if even His garments when touched—touched, be it remembered, for this is an indispensable condition, with unwavering faith—effected an instantaneous cure. Wherefore let not him who in faith and confidence touches the wondrous sacramental garment which veils the body of Christ from our view doubt that he will be healed. Rise up then, O unhappy soul, tormented as you are by bad tendencies, hampered by evil habits; come, hasten with the heathen woman to Jesus; go to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament joyfully, hopefully, remembering the words of the Imitation (B. iv. ch. 4): "This most lofty and most excellent sacrament is the health of soul and body, the remedy of all spiritual languor; in it my defects are healed, my passions restrained, temptations overcome or lessened, greater grace is infused, virtue once begun increased, faith confirmed, hope strengthened, charity inflamed and enlarged."

THURSDAY AFTER THE SEVENTH SUNDAY  
AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE MIRACULOUS POOL IN JERUSALEM.

At the so-called sheeps' gate in Jerusalem there was a pool, possessing a miraculous power of healing, on account of which it bore the name of Bethsaida, i.e., a fount or source of healing and grace. Go in spirit to this pool; around its basin you will see a pentangular colonnade, with five porches. In these a multitude of sick people suffering from various infirmities and diseases are anxiously awaiting the moment when the angel of God should descend into the pool and the water be moved. Keep this remarkable scene before your eyes while you meditate upon its mystic meaning.

1st. The miraculous pool in Jerusalem is an emblem of the spiritual healing in the waters of the Sacrament of Penance. In Greek this pool is called Probatika, or the sheep-pool, probably because the lambs were washed therein that were to be offered up in the sacrifices of the Jewish worship. St. Jerome asserts that the waters of this pool were dyed a reddish tint, on account, as some surmise, of the blood of the victims slain in the temple mixing in it at its source. Thus this pool affords an admirable type of that miraculous bath wherein the wandering, the sin-stained sheep of the Good Shepherd may be washed and purified; both the laver of regeneration, holy baptism, whose waters derive their healing efficacy from the sacrificial blood of the Lamb of God, and also the Sacrament of Penance, wherein the sheep of God's fold who have contracted stains subsequent to baptism may be cleansed anew, and thus rendered fit, rendered worthy to participate in the oblation and sacrificial feast of the New Testament. Now consider, my soul, with what reverence the multitude of sick regarded the pool in Jerusalem; with what exemplary patience they waited for days,

weeks, even years until the moment should arrive when it should be granted them to go down into the healing waters, and with what gratitude those who were cured ever after contemplated that spring. Now you, who have, not once, but times innumerable, experienced the healing virtue of the Probatica pool of the New Testament, are so indifferent to this privilege that you grudge the slight effort, you cannot spare the short time required to go down into these saving waters; and seldom indeed do you cast a look of gratitude on the confessional into which you entered with a soul grievously sick, and whence you came out made whole of whatsoever infirmity you lay under.

2d. Consider that around the miraculous pool five porches were constructed, from which the sick persons could with greater ease and convenience step down into the healing water. So likewise in the spiritual Bethsaida, the holy Sacrament of Penance, there are five porches for the benefit of souls that are sick, five considerations, each and all of which cannot fail to urge the sinner to approach the sacrament, provided he reflects upon them seriously. In the first place, the consciousness of his own sinfulness is a means of facilitating the descent of the sinner to the mystic pool, the sacred tribunal of penance. If he were once thoroughly convinced of the hideous defilement of his soul, he would no more neglect to purify himself inwardly than he would to wash off any spot of mud he might perceive on his outward person. In the second place, the knowledge that after death there is no more place for repentance is an inducement to approach the tribunal of penance. A sick man, passing by a health resort, would assuredly stop and take the waters if he were informed that he would meet with no other in the course of his journey. The third inducement to do penance is the thought of the awful judgment, and the yet more awful torments of hell, which may be escaped by approaching the Sacrament of Penance. A criminal condemned to death who could obtain a reversal of his sentence and escape the gallows by throwing himself at

the king's feet and imploring pardon, would not deem it a very difficult matter to prostrate himself before his sovereign. The fourth inducement is the remembrance of the risk incurred by postponing the hour of repentance, or of leaving it until death is at hand. If one of the sick persons at the Probatica pool had not availed himself of the first opportunity of recovering his health, if he had waited for the next time the angel descended, when some other sufferer might easily be before him, should we not have thought he was out of his senses? Fifthly, the thought of the desolation and wretchedness of a state of sin, compared with the joy, the consolation, the peace of mind enjoyed by the repentant sinner, serves as a strong inducement to have recourse to the Sacrament of Penance. Surely the consciousness of their own miserable condition, and the sight of their former fellow sufferers coming out of the water whole and happy, were enough to make the sick who lay in the porches around the sheep-pool long earnestly to go down into the healing waters as soon as possible. Do you not feel the same desire? Reflect upon the five points enumerated above; they may prove profitable to you.

3d. Consider how much more abundant in graces the pool of the New Testament, i.e., holy penance, is than that of the Old Testament. We have seen how in the porches of the sheep-pool there lay a multitude of sick, suffering from various maladies; of blind, of lame, of deaf, of dumb, some a prey to fever, others to dropsy, all waiting for the moving of the water. Happy he who is the first to step into the water; those who come too late will all have to wait long, wait perhaps for years before they have another chance. Oh how infinitely greater are the advantages of the sick who desire their spiritual cure from the healing waters of penance! They are not limited as to time; they can come whenever they choose, and as many as will may come; they may one and all step down into the fount of healing, as soon as the angel of God, divine grace, calls them. And of a truth this grace, this call of grace is never lacking. We are daily invited, urged to do



penance, yet how many hold back through indolence and stubbornness of will, not attempting to bathe in the healing flood! They seem to think that God must do all, that He must, so to speak, carry them down to the pool, for they forget the beautiful words of St. Augustine: "He who created thee without thyself will not save thee without thyself." How do matters stand with you, my soul, in regard to this necessary co-operation on your part? Consider this well, and in conclusion lay this one thing to heart: Had you been standing beside the sheep-pool in Jerusalem and had seen a sick man whom you could have helped to go down into the water, you would undoubtedly have given him your assistance. Now think how many, many sick souls there are to whom you can render aid by the tribunal of penance, by sermons and admonitions, by intercessory prayer and performing acts of expiation on their behalf, by means of the holy sacrifice and patience in the confessional—think of this, and act accordingly.

## FRIDAY AFTER THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE CHARITY OF JESUS DURING HIS PASSION.

It is always a pleasing sight to see any one perform a kind action towards his neighbor; and when the charitable work is done at the cost of self-denial and stern self-sacrifice, it merits our admiration in a far higher degree. But what calls for the highest admiration, what is most touching, most deeply affecting is to see a man suffering excruciating agony, nay, in the very pangs of death, in his last agony, yet so forgetful of self, that his words, his actions still breathe tender charity for his fellow men. This impressive sight is afforded by the Redeemer in His Passion and death, which are recalled to mind every Friday.

**1st.** Consider the charity that actuated Him during the terrible agony in the Garden of Olives. Apart from the fact that charity was the cause, the motive of His Passion as a whole, observe how charity was exhibited in every, even the smallest detail, and was apparent throughout the course of the Passion, from the time of His going up to the Mount of Olives until He drew His last breath upon the cross. When He went into the Garden of Olives He left eight of His disciples behind, out of tender compassion for their frailty, sparing them the sight of their Master's agony lest it might cause their faith to waver. With the fear of death oppressing Him He prays, He keeps His tearful vigil, holding aloof from the three disciples who are asleep, lovingly desirous to spare them, although in His anguish and desolation their presence would have been a comfort to Him. When the executioners came to apprehend Him, He does not think of Himself; His only concern is for the disciples who took no part with Him in His agony. For them He entreats His enemies: "If you seek Me, let these go their way." (St. John xviii. 8.) On seeing Malchus, one of His foes, bleeding from the blow struck by Peter, He lovingly stretches out His hand to heal him, the self-same beneficent hand on which Malchus has come to put fetters. Look, my soul, into this mirror of charity which your suffering Lord holds up to your view, and compare your charity towards your neighbor with that which He manifested in His agony on the Mount of Olives—sparing, saving, interceding for others.

**2d.** Consider furthermore His charity during the bitter sufferings He endured throughout the night and in the morning after His arrest. With loving patience and in silence He bears the coarse maltreatment of the soldiers, in order not to provoke them to the increase of their guilt, and yet more in order to touch their hearts, if possible, by His patience. Without a single word of reproach He turns His eyes upon Peter after his fall with so loving an expression, that he who had denied Him a moment before bewails his fault with tears of repentance. He rewards the trifling service rendered to Him by Veronica

with the gift of the miraculous image imprinted on her veil; nor does He fail, despite His deadly fatigue, His own deep need of solace, to address words of loving consolation, of salutary admonition, to the weeping women of Jerusalem. Such was the fraternal charity exercised by Jesus when led captive along the *via crucis*, whereas you, one of God's chosen servants, a special object of His favor, living in the most favorable circumstances, so rarely practise this virtue. You treat your neighbor with unkindness and impatience, instead of with kind forbearance; the fire of hatred and revenge too often gleams in your eyes instead of compassionate forgiveness; instead of returning grateful thanks you sometimes requite good with evil, and instead of comforting the afflicted, you are the cause of grief to others. How much longer will you plead guilty to this indictment?

3d. Consider the charity of Jesus whilst hanging upon the cross. One would have imagined that in this hour of awful torture, in the agony of death, that our Lord would no longer have had the wish, the power to exercise the same loving solicitude for men. But it is not so. As long as His heart beats, it throbs with love; as long as His lips can move, they utter words of love, and until His eyes grow dim in death, they dwell with looks of love upon unhappy mortals. "Father, forgive them," such is His loving prayer on behalf of those who crucified Him. "This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise," such is the loving consolation He gives to the repentant thief. "Woman, behold thy son," such are the words wherewith the dying Son, in loving anxiety for His Mother, commends her to the care of the apostle. And even when His eyes are closed, His lips benumbed by death, those being the only instruments left Him after His hands were fixed to the cross by nails, the only means whereby to exercise His ardent charity, even then He causes His side to be pierced, in order that His loving heart may ever be open to receive all who need His aid. O my soul, is it possible that with charity such as this before you, the charity displayed by your Lord and Master in His Passion and

death, you can be so cold, so wanting in charity towards your Brethren, your Sisters? And yet you can look up, without blushing with shame, to your crucified Lord, and can take His holy name upon your lips!

## SATURDAY AFTER THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE VALUE OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

Another week of your life is drawing to its close. How quickly time passes, the time given to you that in it you may gain eternity, an eternity of happiness; that you may earn Heaven. Our Lord compares the kingdom of Heaven to a pearl, a pearl of such great price that a merchant sacrifices all that he has, the whole of his property, in order to purchase that one pearl. The comparison is just, as you will see by the consideration of the following points:

1st. How great is the value which God the Son attaches to this pearl, i.e., the kingdom of Heaven. Consider how costly, how precious that pearl must have been, to obtain which the merchant in the Gospel (St. Matt. xiii. 45) not only undertook a long and toilsome journey, but staked his all, his whole property and possessions, in order to buy that one single pearl. This merchant is none other than Jesus Christ Himself. For the purpose of gaining this jewel, of purchasing the kingdom of Heaven for us, He, the Almighty God, came down from heaven to earth, and He spent the space of thirty-three years here below in purchasing that pearl, enduring unspeakable hardships and bitter toil, suffering at last cruel torture and anguish, and giving up all, the last drop of His blood, life itself, for the sake of gaining it. Oh how valuable, how costly beyond all price must this pearl be, the kingdom of Heaven, so dearly purchased! And yet you—alas!—cast this pearl before swine.

**2d.** Consider how great is the value God the Father attaches to this pearl, the kingdom of Heaven. Think how highly a monarch must value the possession of a fortress, of what paramount importance he must deem it for the welfare of his realm, if in order to conquer it he not only sacrifices the health, the wealth, nay, the life of thousands of his subjects, but does not raise the siege although he is aware that the conquest of that fortress will inevitably cost the life of his own son. Now reflect upon this, my soul: The King of Heaven, the all-bountiful Father of mankind, sees thousands, millions of His children giving all they possess, shedding their blood, in order to gain Heaven; He sees how some strip themselves of their wealth, others mortify and chastise their bodies, in the struggle for this prize, the kingdom of Heaven; how some ruin their health in the service of the sick or in evangelizing distant lands, and oftentimes suffer a painful or violent death; He sees even how His own beloved Son endured the most ignominious, the most cruel death to win that treasure, and yet He permits all that, nay, He, the loving Father, actually takes pleasure in the sight. It would indeed be impossible that He should do so, did He not know the immense, the immeasurable value of the pearl, for the possession of which His children pay so high a price. And you, my soul, regard a trifling exertion, a short struggle, a paltry sacrifice as too much!

**3d.** Consider how sinful it is to lose the pearl of great price, the kingdom of Heaven. Who can do otherwise than severely condemn Queen Cleopatra's excessive extravagance, when she melted a pearl of enormous value, worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, in a goblet of wine, which she drank off at one draught. But what is her culpable extravagance, her senseless waste, in comparison with that of which many Christians, not excluding Priests and Religious (who at least cannot excuse themselves on the plea of ignorance, etc.), render themselves guilty, in that they wilfully lose the pearl of incomparably greater price, the kingdom of Heaven which Christ purchased for them with His own sacred blood, for the sake of an hour's

sensual gratification, of a few grains of the incense of earthly applause, for the paltry gain of a few pieces of silver. For this sorry prize they give up the kingdom of Heaven! Grieve over the blindness of those deluded individuals, pray for them; and at the same time see that you are not one of them. The hours, the days, the years pass away in rapid succession. Your life is thus passing away, and when it is run out—then you will either have gained or lost the celestial pearl of great price.

## THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE UNJUST STEWARD.

Imagine that you see before you the unjust steward at the moment when his lord calls on him to give an account of his stewardship. What alarm, what dismay seizes on him! See the perplexity in which he finds himself, not knowing what is to be done, debating within himself as to the best means of getting out of the difficulty. It is a sad sight, almost enough to move one to pity, but it is also extremely instructive.

**1st.** Consider the words of the rich man: "Give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou canst be steward no longer." (St. Luke xvi. 2.) The rich man represents Almighty God; the unjust steward is a sinful man, who has wasted and misused the goods committed to his management, his body and his soul, his worldly possessions and intellectual gifts. Because of this infidelity on his part he is now accused before God. By whom is the accusation brought? By the omniscience of the Most High, by the devil, by his own guilty conscience, by each and all of these he is accused. Nay more, as St. Chrysostom declares, the earth itself cries out against him, the very heavens cry out, the creatures he has put to a bad use cry out against him for his disloyalty, so that God is as it

were compelled to arraign him before His tribunal and call him to account, saying: "Give an account of thy stewardship," give an account of the use thou hast made of thy memory, thy understanding, thy will, thy health, thy learning, thy earthly and spiritual endowments.

Not yet, O my soul, has the Lord addressed to you this awful summons, but you know not how soon it may sound in your ears. Wherefore: "In all things look to the end, and see how thou wilt be able to stand before the strict Judge, from whom nothing is hidden; who is not appeased by bribes, who admits no excuses, but will judge that which is just." (Imit. B. i. ch. 24.)

2d. Consider how the steward consults within himself, and says: "What shall I do because my lord taketh away from me the stewardship? To dig I am not able, to beg I am ashamed." (v. 5.) Observe that first of all he consults not with his friends and relatives, but with himself, since when he stands before the judgment-seat of God, each unhappy individual must answer for himself; friends and relatives can do nothing to help him. Observe also that the steward says: "What shall I do?" He does not say: What shall I say, how shall I excuse myself, for in the presence of the just Judge words are of no avail; fair speeches, polished, well-turned sentences will not advance our cause; deeds alone and works will be taken into consideration, works, be it remarked, that have been performed in the past, for as the steward says: "To dig I am not able," i.e., hereafter there will be neither time nor place to dig, the time for action is over, the night has come wherein no man can work, when even begging is an impossibility. You will not be able to throw yourself at the feet of the Judge and implore pardon, nor will you be able to invoke the assistance of the saints; alone and helpless you will stand before the just Judge with your good works and nothing more. I exhort you therefore to employ yourself now in digging for treasures, treasures which will go with you into eternal life; do not now be ashamed to beg, to beseech God for pardon with true contrition, humbly to implore the intercession of the saints; remembering these words:

“Why dost thou not provide for thyself against the day of judgment, when no man can be excused or defended by another, but when every one will be burden enough for himself? Now thy labor is fruitful, thy tears are acceptable, thy sighs can be heard, thy sorrow is satisfactory and purifying.” (B. i. ch. 24.)

**3d.** Consider what is written in the Gospel: “The lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely.” (v. 8.) Observe and understand that what the lord commends is not the unjust action, but the wisdom the steward exhibits in averting the fate that threatens to overtake him. You ought also to display a like wisdom in spiritual matters, wisdom in providing for the strict account that will soon be demanded of you. The steward looked to the end and provided against it before it was too late; see that you do the same. He bethought himself of his opulent friends; do you imitate him, and send before you friends who will speak for you in the judgment, who will assist you for eternity; that is to say, practise some good works every day, never lie down to rest without having performed some act of charity, if it only be a prayer for the holy souls; in short, make unto yourself, as the unjust steward did, “friends of the mammon of iniquity;” that is, make such use of earthly goods, if you have them, live in such a manner in this evil world—and even in the cloister you cannot escape contact with it—that when you fail, when your last hour comes, they may receive you into everlasting habitations, as one who, with Christian forethought, provided well against the day of reckoning. Supposing, my soul, that you were called upon this day to give an account of your stewardship, would it be found that you had wisely provided for it, or would you be taken by surprise as were the foolish virgins? If your case would be that of the latter, why, I ask you, did you enter a Religious Order? You could not have fared worse had you remained in the world.



## MONDAY AFTER THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE CURE OF THE MAN WHO HAD BEEN INFIRM FOR THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS.

Go to-day in spirit to the spot where once before you found a subject for meditation, the miraculous pool at Jerusalem. There amidst the multitude of sick folk lying under the porches around that healing fount, you will see one unhappy individual who for thirty-eight years has been waiting, longing for help and restoration to health. One might almost expect that after so long a time he would have given up all hope of cure, that he would perhaps in despair have resigned himself to the disconsolate thought: There is no more chance of help for me. But all at once a stranger approaches him, a man of singularly dignified appearance, who asks him: "Wilt thou be made whole?" Realize, my soul, the feelings of the sick man, half astonished, half hopeful, at having this strange question addressed to him.

**1st.** According to the exposition given by St. Cyril, this question was intended to revive the desire of the sick man for cure and inspire him with fresh courage, the courage to hope that after so protracted a period of apparently hopeless affliction relief was yet in store for him, yea, that he might even implore it as a miracle from the stranger who spoke so kindly to him. This compassion on Jesus' part is not without its effect. His words lead the man who is infirm to anticipate speedy help. He tells Him of his forlorn condition, complaining that he has no man, when the water is troubled, to put him into the pool, and he evidently expects our Lord to render him that service. This sick man represents on the one hand the miserable, helpless condition of all mankind, who for long years, for centuries lay spiritually sick with no one to render them

any assistance until at length Christ came; and on the other hand, he presents a touching image of the hardened sinner, who for years has laid on a spiritual sick-bed. But alas for those who are sick with a spiritual malady; they cannot plead the same excuse as the man in the Gospel; they cannot say: "Sir, I have no man." (St. John v. 7.) For, as St. Augustine says, we cannot make these words our own, because we know Jesus, we have Him who became man for our salvation; because we can whenever we choose step down into the healing waters of penance; because at any time we can find men who are ready to help us, our Pastors and Confessors. You, my soul, have no right to complain: "Sir, I have no man," and therefore lay these pathetic words to heart in respect to others. You know many souls who for long years have been the slaves of sin, whom no one warns, for whom no one prays; they have no man in truth who interests himself on their behalf. Here is an opportunity for you; warn them, admonish them, pray for them; voluntary penance, undertaken by some pious soul unostentatiously and secretly for some confirmed sinner, has not infrequently brought about a miraculous cure such as that on which we meditate to-day. Again; one of these hardened sinners comes to you in the confessional. Are you as kind, as patient towards him, as anxious to inspire him with confidence as was Jesus to the man who had been infirm for thirty-eight years? Woe betide you if in mistaken zeal you repel one such forsaken soul, if you at once give up all hope of reforming him, if you do not, despite all adverse appearances, make at least one effort to help him. Unless you do this, the complaint of the luckless sinner, "Sir, I have no man," will one day be your condemnation.

2d. Consider the signal compassion which Jesus shows for this sick man, who, be it observed, brought his malady on himself by his sins. He does not content Himself—though this would have been in itself a great charity—with the ordinary means of cure, plunging him into the healing water, but by a special miracle He makes him perfectly whole. How often our Lord has wrought a similar

miracle of mercy on some sinner who for years has been enslaved by the sickness of the soul! Suddenly, unexpectedly, He touches the obdurate heart, and by means of a simple sermon from the lips of one of His servants, by means of some affliction or calamity, He, so to speak, forcibly drags the sinner, in his last hour perhaps, on his very death-bed, out of a state of mortal sin. Therefore see that you never lose hope in regard to any soul, as long as life remains; exercise, after the example of our Lord, the utmost patience and charity; and when you feel inclined really to despair, then place all your trust on the mercy of God; if all your words, all your efforts are fruitless, then have recourse to prayer; with tears and sighs appeal to the all-powerful God, and very often you will see wonders worked. "However hardened a nation may be," thus St. Bernard wrote to Pope Eugene III., "even if it have a heart of stone, yet 'God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham.'" (St. Matt. iii. 9.) The prophet of old exclaimed: "Who knoweth but He will return and forgive, and leave a blessing behind Him?" (Joel ii. 14.) Remember this, my soul, and do not weary in your prayers, your labors, your groans on behalf of sinners.

**3d.** Consider the words which our Lord addressed to the man when he was healed: "Arise, take up thy bed and walk" (v. 8), and when he had done so, our Lord added: "Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more lest something worse happen unto thee." (v. 14.) This sentence affords abundant material for meditation. Three things are required on the part of one who has been made spiritually whole, if he would preserve his spiritual health and not fall into the sin of relapse. He must rise from the state of sin, he must renounce entirely the sin which has been forgiven him, he must carefully avoid it for the future. Furthermore he must take up and carry away the bed on which he has lain sick—that is, hold aloof from all occasions of sin, remove all that may tempt him to sin—otherwise all will be of no good. Finally he must walk, that is, he must daily labor, struggle, fight against long-indulged habit, and go forward manfully on the path

of that virtue which is opposed to his besetting sin. Unless he do this, if he fall back into the same sin, woe be-tide him, for a worse thing will happen to him; the sin of relapse brings in its train transgressions more numerous and more heinous, and also chastisements of a severer nature. Let your thoughts dwell on this. If you are a Priest, do not be satisfied with merely making the sinner whole through the power of remission committed to you, but speak to him, as Jesus spoke to the man who had been sick for thirty-eight years. Act like a good physician; try to prevent your patient from being again attacked by the same malady; do not rest until he has removed the occasion of sin to a distance; instruct him how to walk in the way of justice, and ask yourself seriously if after all you have not often been failing in your duty in regard to this second part of what your office requires of you, as one who has the cure of souls.

## TUESDAY AFTER THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE BEHAVIOR OF THE JEWS ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
CURE OF THE MAN WHO WAS INFIRM FOR THIRTY-  
EIGHT YEARS.

Imagine that in the town where you live the miraculous cure of a man known to be suffering from a severe malady had been effected by an eminent servant of God. What joy this would cause in the town! how all the inhabitants would rejoice! how much would be thought of the man of God! how he would be esteemed and beloved, for having conferred so great a benefit upon one of his fellow creatures! Yet the Jews, the Pharisees, acted quite differently when Jesus showed a similar favor to one of their sick brethren. Instead of manifesting any pleasure, they were very angry.

**1st.** Consider the cause of their anger—it was envy of

Jesus. The day on which He healed the sick man happened to be the Sabbath. When they saw him take up his bed and carry it away, their first impulse was to cry out about the desecration of the Sabbath, to inveigh against both the man who was healed and our Lord who healed him, accusing them both of sin. Now reflect upon this, my soul: These Jews, the very same men who would not scruple to raise up an ox which had fallen into a pit on the Sabbath day, were certainly not animated by zeal for the observance of the commandment; they only made it a pretext to vent their hatred and envy of Jesus. It was envy that instigated them to blame Him, and so blinded were they by that passion that they denounced a benefit, an act of charity, nay a divine work, as a profanation of the Sabbath. Here, my soul, you see the abominable nature of envy. The tongue of envy censures even the good deeds of his brother; it seeks to asperse them and if possible represent them as defective, as sinful. Do not flatter yourself that you are free from this failing, so common to mankind. Else why should you be vexed and downcast if a Brother or Sister surpasses you in virtue? why are you so anxious to discover spots on the sun? why have you always something contrary to say when you hear your neighbor praised? Thus it is that the germ of envy within your breast first begins to make itself manifest externally.

2d. Consider the reason why the Jews, and pre-eminently the Pharisees, conceived this envy of our Lord. It was because they perceived that on account of His most holy life, in which it was impossible to discover anything blameworthy, on account of His stupendous miracles He was day by day held in greater esteem, more beloved by the people, whereas their influence proportionately diminished. John, who was destitute of any feeling of envy, did indeed say: "He must increase but I must decrease" (St. John iii. 30), but the Pharisees were quite incapable of such a generous appreciation of the Redeemer's superior greatness. They wanted to be considered as the best and most religious, hence arose

their envy of every one who appeared to surpass them in this respect, and throw them into the shade. Thus we see that self-seeking, self-love is the root of envy. Look into your own heart, therefore, and see whether aught of this self-seeking lurks therein; it is a fault which, as the name implies, consists in seeking one's own aggrandizement, one's own will, one's own comfort at all times and in all things; a fault which the learned Humbert calls the plague of the religious life. And it is with justice that He gives it that name, for the Religious who is possessed by it, instead of rejoicing in the progress his Brethren make, their success in their sacred ministry, is only annoyed because he has no share in it; he ignores what he ought to recognize with pleasure, and endeavors to hinder what he ought to strive to promote.

**3d.** Consider the disastrous consequences which this envy, this self-seeking had for the Jews. In spite of the wondrous teaching of our Lord, which they had daily an opportunity of hearing, in spite of the striking miracles of which they were eye-witnesses, they did not believe in Him. Seeing, they did not see, and hearing, they did not hear; their jealousy and self-seeking was the hindrance, and it is just the same in the case of Priests and Religious if they have these faults. Apart from the fact that they never do any good to others—for the divine blessing does not rest upon what they do with a view to their own glory, not the glory of God—all those things which are conducive to the spiritual profit of others only do them harm. The virtue of those around them, which edifies others, only embitters them; the perfection whereto their neighbor attains, which serves as a stimulus to others, only excites in them a secret ill-will; the word of God, proclaimed by the lips of one of their brethren with force and fire, which is to hundreds a source of solace and encouragement, awakens their jealousy and is by them unjustly criticised. Wherefore consider well, as Rodriguez exhorts us, how pernicious envy is, since by it our neighbor's good works our ruin; and reflect to-day how you can best grapple with this abominable, this most danger-

ous enemy of the spiritual life, one which is, alas! but too commonly met with.

## WEDNESDAY AFTER THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE DISCIPLES PLUCKING THE EARS OF CORN.

Represent to yourself how our Lord's disciples, going through the corn-fields one Sabbath day, being hungry, began to pluck the ears and to eat. Jesus, Himself the Lord of the Sabbath, gentle and compassionate, allows them to do this. He, the Judge of all men, the omniscient God, sees the action and finds no sin in it. But beside Him some Pharisees are walking and they watch the disciples with a spiteful expression, crying out loudly and protesting against this profanation of the Sabbath, this violation of the law of God. What a striking contrast this scene presents to us! Keep it before your eyes while you meditate upon the useful lessons to be learnt from it.

**1st.** We read that our Lord's disciples were hungry. (St. Matt. xii. 1.) How can this be? Is it possible that the all-merciful, all-bountiful God permits those to suffer hunger who have left all for His sake? He works a miracle to feed thousands who have come from afar, while His own immediate followers must needs appease their hunger with a few ears of corn. In this you see, my soul, how our Lord endeavors to prepare His disciples betimes for the great privations and sacrifices which they will encounter if they follow Him. You also, my soul, have pledged yourself to follow Christ. Oh see that you never forget whom it is that you are following; it is the destitute, the crucified Jesus! Not abundance but want, not riches but poverty, not ease but hardship is the lot of His disciples here on earth. This is the great distinction

between you and the worldling; you seek what he flies from, and you renounce what he labors to obtain. But alas for you if you belong to those Religious of whom St. Bernard writes: "Thou, who dost call thyself a Religious, who hast taken the vow of poverty, canst not bear any privation, any discomfort? That argues not the love of poverty, but the love of comfort, the desire to have all things in plenty. Very probably in the world thou wouldst have fared much worse." Is it right then that we, who have entered a Religious Order for the purpose of mortifying ourselves and doing penance, should enjoy more ease and comfort than we should have had in the world?

2d. Consider that our Lord was accompanied by others besides His disciples, by the Pharisees. These latter did not however follow Him as disciples; their object was to watch Him narrowly and censure Him mercilessly. In fact, as soon as they saw the hungry disciples plucking the ears of corn, they forthwith began to find fault with them, and accuse them of breaking the Sabbath. "Behold," they said to Jesus, for it was at Him they spoke all the while, "behold, Thy disciples do that which it is not lawful to do on the Sabbath day." (v. 2.) O hypocrites that you are! You condemn in others what has only the appearance of wrongdoing, and at the same time you yourselves commit real and actual sin. You blame others for appeasing their hunger on the Sabbath day, but you consider it no sin to do your utmost on a Sabbath day to compass the death of Jesus. That is the way in which uncharitable, censorious persons act. They notice the least peccadillo on the part of their brother, they magnify molehills into mountains, they cavil and pick holes in what is most praiseworthy and themselves have a beam of no slight bulk in their eye. Beware, my soul, of this pharisaical fault-finding; beware of rash and severe judgments, which are so common to the children of Adam. "Turn thine eyes upon thyself," says Thomas à Kempis, "and take heed thou judge not the doings of others. In judging others a man labors in



vain, often errs, and easily sins, but in judging and looking into himself he always labors with fruit." (Imit. B. i. ch. 14.)

**3d.** Consider the answer which Jesus returns to the spiteful censure of the Jews: "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." (v. 7.) That is to say, it is far more pleasing to Almighty God that the hungry should be fed, than that the Sabbath rest should be scrupulously observed and at the same time the law of charity should be broken. For the Sabbath, the sacrifice which we make to God, is made for man and not man for the Sabbath. Thus our Lord teaches us on this occasion that it is not right to neglect the greater for the sake of fulfilling the lesser, and that we ought not to offer sacrifice to God, the sacrifice of prayer, of meditation, of attendance at religious services, at the expense of the far greater law of charity. For instance, you would fain assist at the celebration of some grand religious festival, but your sick neighbor needs your help; therefore remain with him, for God says: "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." Here consider, my soul, another case, a very important one for those who are engaged in the sacred ministry. You are oftentimes heard to complain that you are called away from the enjoyment of the sweet contemplation of a life of seclusion by the duties which the cure of souls, which fraternal charity imposes on you; do not let this disquiet you, for our Lord says: "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." St. Bernard, not forgetful that no one is a true follower of Christ who is not willing to sacrifice his own tranquillity for his neighbor's peace of mind, once said: "God's rule, the rule of Christian charity, must be preferred to the rule of St. Benedict"; and the same eminent saint, who took so great a delight in mental prayer, bids us be ready to abandon the repose of prayer, the quiet of meditation, in order to labor for the salvation of souls and comfort our neighbor with kindly words. For the love of God, he says, cannot remain inactive; not only does it immediately abandon the sweet rest of contemplation, but hastens with the greatest alacrity to dis-

play its ardent zeal, its glowing love of souls, its charity towards its neighbor whenever occasion offers.

In this respect also, my soul, meditate upon the words of Jesus: "I will have mercy and not sacrifice"; and they will be to you both an exhortation and a consolation.

## THURSDAY AFTER THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE CURE OF THE MAN WHO HAD A WITHERED HAND.

In the synagogue at Jerusalem there was a man who had a withered hand. Tradition says that he was a mason, and therefore the use of the diseased hand was absolutely necessary for him to earn his daily bread. Behold him standing as a suppliant before Him who has power to help him, the all-merciful Saviour, whilst in the background the wily Pharisees are looking on, for it is a Sabbath day and consequently, according to their mistaken views, it would be unlawful to attempt to heal the sufferer. With this scene present to your mind proceed to consider what may be learnt from it.

1st. Our Lord knew that the Pharisees were only on the watch for an occasion to bring an accusation against Him, that they might destroy Him, and it was only with this evil intention that they put the question to Him: "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath days?" (St. Matt. xii. 10.) Nevertheless the precept of charity, the spirit of compassion, outweighed with Him every scruple, every personal consideration. Though He was exposing Himself thereby to their anger and hatred, to their vengeance and their calumnies, He did not hesitate to utter the words: "Stretch forth thy hand" (v. 13), and thus healed the man's infirmity. Learn from our Lord's example to give the first and highest place to God's law, to hold it in greater consideration than the favor of men, to

practise charity and do a deed of mercy even at the risk of incurring the wrath and slanders of men. One ought never, it is true, to give scandal or occasion of offence to any one, but if one clearly recognizes the performance of some act to be a duty towards God or one's neighbor, no selfish motives, no thought of human respect, or dread of losing the favor of men ought to hold one back. If we were deterred by these things, where would there be any good works? Our Lord would not have founded His Church, the saints would not have founded Orders. My soul, lay to heart this important teaching and for the future pay less regard to man and more to God, remembering those golden words: "He who covets not to please men and fears not their displeasure shall enjoy much peace." (Imit. B. iii. ch. 28.)

2d. Consider that Jesus is not satisfied with having, undeterred by the craft of the Pharisees, shown mercy to the afflicted man; He goes so far as to extend His kindness to His antagonists, gently rebuking them, and endeavoring by means of the comparison of the sheep that had fallen into a pit to convince them that He had done rightly. But the Jews will not take this kindly rebuke. Their pride will not permit them to admit the justice of that which their reason approves. Instead of allowing themselves to be corrected, they only hate the speaker more bitterly. You are perhaps, my soul, shocked at the malice of these bad men, but think a moment, are you not condemning yourself in condemning them? For, as St. Bernard says, we are so puffed up with pride, that we cannot tolerate the slightest reprimand, and instead of thanking those who call us to account for our faults, we regard their reproof in the light of an unjust persecution. This is an abominable, a most pernicious fault. An eminent divine compares those who will not be corrected to the devil, because they are incorrigible as he is. "He that hateth to be reprov'd walketh in the trace of a sinner." (Ecclus. xxi. 7.) The great St. Basil also writes thus on this subject: "If for our health's sake we make use of bitter medicines, and thank the physician who for

our cure employs the knife or applies caustic, is it not meet that for the salvation of our soul and the good of the Order we should in like manner submit to be rebuked, however repugnant this may be to our whole inner man?"

**3d.** Consider how our Lord acted subsequently. When He saw that His kind words, far from doing good, only added fuel to the fire of the Jews' anger and hatred against Him, when He saw that they actually "made a consultation against Him how they might destroy Him," He retired from thence. He would not enter into any disputation, any strife with them. As kindness was of no avail, He withdrew out of the way. Learn of Jesus, my soul, to yield to your opponents and keep silence, to bear and suffer patiently where the only other alternative is wrangling and struggling with them. The observance of this rule is a necessary condition for the peace of every family, every Community, every convent. "If two hard things collide, a great noise is made, but if a hard substance strikes against a soft one, the impact scarcely causes a sound to be heard." "A cannon-ball," says Rodriguez, "knocks down a tower with a loud report, but if it hits a wool sack, it makes no noise and does no harm." Learn of Jesus to cultivate this wise habit of yielding to others; you need not fear that you will thereby demean yourself. Examine your conscience as to how matters are with you in this respect, and ponder well this admonition of Holy Scripture: "A mild answer breaketh wrath, but a harsh word stirreth up fury." (Prov. xv. 1.) "Strive not with a man that is full of tongue, and heap not wood upon his fire." (Ecclus. viii. 4.)

## FRIDAY AFTER THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON OUR LORD'S HUMILITY AS DISPLAYED IN HIS PASSION.

Imagine that you see our blessed Redeemer on the way of the cross; that you see Him terribly disfigured by blood and wounds, groaning beneath the heavy burden of the cross, painfully staggering along the hard and thorny road that leads to Calvary. Hear how He calls to you: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart." (St. Matt. xi. 29.) Truly humility is a lesson which we may well learn from our suffering Lord if we study His example in His Passion.

1st. All the masters of the spiritual life teach us that humility manifests itself in a fourfold manner; first, by flying from the honors men would confer on us; secondly, as St. Anselm says, by bearing contempt with patience; thirdly, by cheerfully enduring insult and ignominy; fourthly, by submitting to each and every one just as if one was the least and lowest of all. Our Lord ascended these four several degrees of humility on His path of suffering, the way of the cross. When the people desired to make Him a king, He fled from them and hid Himself, He refused the honor; but now, when they treat Him as an assassin and a robber, He does not try to escape from them, He bears every mark of contempt with the utmost patience, He allows Himself to be loaded with insults and reproaches; nay, He takes delight in them, He rejoices, and as a giant He runs His way, that way being the way of the cross. Only see how cheerfully He submits to every one, as if He were indeed the meanest of all. He acquiesces in the unjust sentence pronounced by Pilate, He permits the executioners to bind Him with cords, He tolerates being placed on a par with Barabbas, the highway robber, and offers no resistance when He is nailed to the cross and lifted up between two thieves. "Is this to

be tolerated," exclaims St. Bernard, "that a miserable worm of earth should exalt and magnify himself, when he sees the most high Son of God thus profoundly humiliated?"

2d. Consider how, in the opinion of theologians, perfect humility consists principally in not priding oneself upon the extraordinary gifts one has received from God. This degree of humility, says St. Bonaventure, is attained by those who are already perfected in virtue and who humble themselves the more in proportion as they increase in perfection. It is nothing wonderful, as the saint remarks, that a wicked man should know himself to be wicked, but it is matter for surprise, and a mark of extraordinary humility, if a man of tried virtue, one on whom God has lavished His graces, and who is truly great in God's sight, should nevertheless consider himself to be the least of his brethren. Now no one ever had greater graces than Jesus had; no one was ever more perfect, more holy than He; no one was ever greater in God's sight than He, Himself the Son of God—and yet regard Him in His Passion. He stands before Herod possessed of miraculous powers, but He conceals these gifts and allows Himself to be taken for a fool. He, the holiest of any who ever trod this earth, does not let His sanctity appear, and permits a murderer to be preferred to Him. No one ever exhibited greater charity towards mankind, no one ever bestowed greater benefits upon them. Yet He does not say a word to remind them of these benefits; in silence He suffers Himself to be nailed to the cross, as if He were man's deadliest foe. O great example of humility, brilliant luminary, compared with Thee the humility even of the saints is but a feebly glimmering spark!

3d. Consider indeed, what is it after all if a man flies from honor, bears contempt, loves reproaches, and does not boast of the graces he receives from the hand of God, after God, the God of infinite majesty, has done the same in the most perfect manner possible. Yet you find it so difficult to practise these exercises of humility; you think you have done wonders if you do not ostensibly

seek honor, if you have in the main obeyed the orders of your Superior. Oh learn to-day of Jesus to be truly humble; learn of Him who has gone before you as your example and your model. Raise your eyes to Him, if an act of humility seems too difficult for your powers. If your pride revolts at having to hold intercourse with the vulgar, think of Him who was crucified in the company of thieves. If you cannot bear to see others preferred before you, imagine that you hear the cry: "Release unto us not this man, but Barabbas!" If you consider you have reason to complain that your services are underrated, look at Jesus, clothed in the robe of a fool. Yes verily, our Lord's Passion is the remedy for our pride. But mark this, as St. Augustine says: "If this remedy is inefficacious to cure our pride, I know not how it can be cured." Examine yourself therefore, my soul; see in what respects you are deficient in humility, and when you have discovered your failing, then turn your eyes upon your crucified Saviour in His deep abasement, and make your own the words of a pious abbot, who at the thought of Christ's humility exclaimed: "Thou hast conquered, O Lord, Thou hast conquered my pride. I give myself a captive to Thee. Take me to be Thy servant from henceforth and for ever."

## SATURDAY AFTER THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE OBEDIENCE WHICH OUR LORD TEACHES US BY HIS  
EXAMPLE.

Picture to yourself the moment wherein our Lord, in the act of expiring, exclaims: "It is consummated." The work is accomplished which God the Father gave Him to do; the decree, the will of God is accomplished, to fulfil which the first-born Son of God came down from heaven; the great act of obedience is performed, by

means of which the world, ruined by disobedience, is to be redeemed. Look, my soul, upon your Saviour, upon Him who was obedient, obedient even to the death of the cross; hear Him even with His latest breath exhorting you to practise this virtue, proclaiming to you its necessity.

**1st.** Consider these words of the Apostle: "As by the disobedience of one man many were made sinners, so also by the obedience of one many shall be made just." (Rom. v. 19.) Consider, and recount to yourself the disastrous consequences of Adam's disobedience and the blessing ensuing from Christ's obedience; compare the state of the world after the act of disobedience committed by the first Adam with its condition subsequently to the death upon the cross of the second Adam in obedience to the divine will, and you will thence learn the importance, the exceeding excellence of the virtue of obedience. Not in vain did Jesus practise this virtue throughout His life and at His death. According to the opinion of St. Augustine one of the motives Jesus had in becoming man was to teach us obedience. Now it behooves you, my soul, you who as a Priest, as a Religious have accepted as your special work, have in fact made it the great aim of your life to imitate the life of our Lord, to copy Him above all in the practice of obedience. Remember what the Apostle says: "By the disobedience of one many were made sinners, but the obedience of one shall make many just," and reflect upon these words of St. Bonaventure: "The whole perfection of a Religious consists in the entire renunciation of his own will in order to fulfil the will of another. Consequently it will profit thee nothing to have abandoned all earthly things so long as thou dost not give up thy own will for the sake of entirely submitting to all that obedience requires of thee."

**2d.** Consider how exact and literal is the obedience our Lord yields. How often we read in the Gospels: "This was done that the Scriptures might be fulfilled." Our Lord's last words: "It is consummated," are to be taken in their widest meaning. Not until He had accomplished all that



was given Him to do, all that was written of Him, did He resign His spirit into the hands of His heavenly Father. See how in His last moments, when the final terrible conflict with death was already begun, He exclaims: "I thirst!" in order obediently to fulfil the last prophecy which yet remained unfulfilled, these words of Holy Writ: "They gave Me gall for My food, and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink." (Ps. lxxviii. 22.) Learn of Jesus in this respect. Hear the exhortation St. Ignatius addresses to his disciples: "Let all take heed to observe the rule of obedience, and let them distinguish themselves by this, that they do not confine their obedience to that which duty requires of them, but that they also obey in other and minor matters every indication, however slight, of the will of their Superior." "The monk who is truly obedient," writes Albertus Magnus, "never waits to have a command laid upon him, but as soon as he knows, or thinks that he knows what is his Superior's will, he executes it as promptly as if it were a command, because Christ our Lord and Saviour acted thus." Ask yourself what is your conduct in this respect?

**3d.** Consider how it is in obedience that our Lord dies. From the moment when He, an infant eight days old, for the first time shed His blood in the temple at Jerusalem in conformity to the law, until the instant when the last drop of His blood trickled out of His wounded side, His whole life was one long series of acts of obedience. It was to fulfil the will of His heavenly Father that He sat faint and weary, but forgetful of weariness and hunger, at Jacob's well, and it was to accomplish the same divine will that He hung upon the cross, that He expired with this glorious testimony on His dying lips: "It is consummated"; thus proclaiming before heaven and earth that He had done all that obedience had laid upon Him. Would that you too, my soul, might so live and die in obedience, for then you would live for God and die for God. "Father," a dying monk once said to his Superior, "you know that I have lived in obedience to you; now I desire to die in that same obedience. Therefore I beseech you

bid me thus die in obedience, as Christ our Redeemer gave up His spirit on the cross in obedience to His heavenly Father." Such is the language of the Christian who has learnt of Jesus to obey. Look, my soul, into this mirror, and see how your conduct appears.

## THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON OUR LORD WEEPING OVER JERUSALEM.

In the tranquil eventide, just when the sun is sinking in the west, behold Jesus ascending the Mount of Olives. Before Him lies Jerusalem, the most beautiful, the most magnificent of all the cities of Israel. How quiet and peaceful it appears, for the noise of the busy streets, the din and turmoil of the town does not reach yonder eminence; all is still and tranquil and beautiful; the marble columns of Herod's palace gleam and glitter in the rays of the setting sun, while the temple, proudly standing on Sion's heights, flashes like a bright jewel set in gold. A fair and fascinating sight indeed, that city of David; Jesus gazes on it, gazes on its splendor, and weeps. Keep this scene present to your mind during your meditation.

**1st.** Consider how, while our Lord looked upon the city standing there in unimpaired stateliness and beauty, the thought of the graces vouchsafed to it by God, the knowledge of the awful judgments about to overtake it, were borne in so forcibly upon the loving, the compassionate heart of Jesus, that He wept over the approaching destruction of the holy city, and wept with an incomparably greater sorrow than that experienced by Jeremias on the occasion of its first destruction, and expressed by him in his Lamentations. Jesus weeps over Jerusalem, over that singularly beauteous city. Grasp this thought, my soul. You also are a fair city like Jerusalem. The temple of the Holy Ghost which you became by divine consecration is more beautiful than the marble temple on

Mount Sion. Your soul, arrayed in the garment of sanctifying grace, shines with greater glory than did the city of David in the red glow of the setting sun, and the dignity of a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, which is in store for you, far exceeds the majesty of the earthly Jerusalem. Our Lord sees this beauty, this splendor, this glory appertaining to you, and He weeps. And why? It may perchance be because you are one of those unhappy Priests and Religious, who are so much to be pitied, of whom St. Augustine speaks when he sorrowfully writes: "We have seen many, and have heard our fathers speak of many, whom I cannot recall to mind without trembling, who at the outset ascended up to Heaven and built their nest among the stars, then later on fell back into the abyss and became hardened in their evil ways. Those who appeared to be most exemplary have fallen to the lowest depths, and those who had eaten the Bread of Angels I have seen feasting on the husks of swine." What is the reason of this deplorable relapse?

2d. Our Lord tells us the cause: "Because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." (St. Luke xix. 44.) How numerous were the graces Jerusalem received from our Lord! how many miracles it witnessed! What opportunities it had for hearing the celestial doctrine He taught! How often He had admonished and warned the faithless city, "as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, so would the Lord have gathered together thy children, but thou wouldst not; thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." And now, O Jerusalem, what will avail thee thy magnificence, the gorgeous brilliance of thy marble columns? Behold, "the days shall come upon thee and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground." (St. Luke xix. 43.) Reflect upon this, my soul. See, the Lord visited you with the fulness of His grace; as a Priest, a Religious, you are a city specially favored and privileged. If, instead of making good use of His grace, instead of laboring arduously, assiduously in the season of salvation, you are perhaps indolent and tepid,

daily becoming more indifferent, oh then you have reason to fear lest your destruction be near. The loftiness of your calling, the prestige, the sanctity of your Order will profit you nothing, if you do not know "the things that are to your peace," if you do not make fervent use of the graces conferred on you. It is not, as St. Augustine once said to the monks of the desert, the place that sanctifies us, but our good works will sanctify both the place and ourselves.

**3d.** Consider how the touching, the pathetic scene presented to our view in the former part of the Gospel for the day, suddenly changes to one of a strikingly different nature. The self-same Saviour who stood upon Mount Olivet, overflowing with benignity and mercy, so that He actually shed tears over the ill-fated city of Jerusalem, shortly after is seen to stand in the temple of that city, in a totally opposite character. The eyes that a little while before shed tears of compassion now flash with indignation; the countenance that on the Mount of Olives wore an expression of sorrowful pity now is lighted up with the anger of the strict Judge, as with imposing majesty He wields the scourge and casts them that sold out of the temple with the condemnatory words: "My house is the house of prayer. But you have made it a den of thieves." (St. Luke xix. 46.) My soul, our Lord still looks on you with a look of gentleness and love, He still weeps over the obduracy of Jerusalem. But if you do not soon cleanse your house from the sins that defile it, He will employ the terrors of His scourge, and because you did not know the time of your visitation, He will visit you with His just anger, and chastise you in His wrath. Even now the arm of the Lord may be uplifted to strike you. Do you know what will avert the blow? Your tears. Yes, weep, weep as Jesus did, weep those tears of contrition of which St. Ambrose says: "O tears of humility, yours is the might, yours is the kingdom. You need not fear the throne of the Judge, you silence every accusation, you conquer the invincible, you prove mightier than the Almighty."

## MONDAY AFTER THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE ELECTION OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES.

When our Lord, after having healed the man who had the withered hand, had retired from among the Jews, He proceeded to accomplish another great work, one in fact of the most momentous upon earth, on which the greatest results depended, the election of the twelve apostles. He was about to lay the foundation whereon His Church was to be built, to appoint the twelve principal leaders of the army which was destined to effect the spiritual conquest of the world, to kindle the twelve torches which were to spread the light of the Gospel in the dark quarters of the earth. How great, how all-important a choice!

1st. Consider that Jesus prepares Himself in a special manner before making the choice of the apostles. Not content with having associated for a whole year with the disciples whom He is going to elect, forming them to the practice of every virtue, teaching and training them by His precept and His example, He spends the whole of the previous night in prayer, in instant, unremitting, fervent supplication on behalf of the men whom He is about to appoint as His apostles, on the choice of whom the salvation of so many thousands depends. Hence learn of Jesus, my soul, never to undertake any work for the salvation of souls without serious forethought, conscientious preparation, without fervent prayer. It is wrong-headed and presumptuous to engage in any important enterprise without such previous preparation as is befitting. St. Gregory says it is one's duty to exhort those who would do so to reflect how young birds, if they attempt to fly before they are fully fledged, are sure to fall to the ground, and it is their desire prematurely to soar aloft which is the very cause of their fall. To commence a work having for its object our own spiritual advancement or the spiritual wel-

fare of others without due preparation, is a wanton trifling with holy things. Preachers, Confessors, Superiors who act thus are denominated by St. Jude as: "Clouds without water which are carried about by the winds." They only disturb the face of the sky and do no good to the earth.

**2d.** Consider that Judas Iscariot was amongst the twelve apostles whom our Lord elected. Since Christ made the choice of these men with so much solemnity and such scrupulous care, we are warranted in assuming that Judas was not then such a grievous sinner, not so enslaved by avarice as he subsequently proved himself to be. If that is so, what a solemn truth this circumstance affords for our meditation! During his intercourse with Jesus Judas becomes a worse man than he was before. After he was made an apostle, Judas fell into evil ways into which while he remained an ordinary Jew he did not stray. Treated by our Lord as an intimate friend—for friend is the appellation Jesus Himself gives him—Judas becomes a traitor. What an appalling fact is this, well calculated to inspire us with salutary fear! Our Lord has called you likewise to be one of His closest followers. You pursue a sacred calling, you dwell in a house consecrated to God, you enjoy the company of the devout. But remember this: No calling was more sacred than the apostolate, no company more devout than that of the apostles, no intercourse more edifying than that of our Lord, and yet one who shared in all these privileges became a Judas. Consequently we see that no condition of life, no place of abode, no prominent characteristic is a preventive against falling into sin. "You are not more holy than David, not more wise than Solomon, not more powerful than Samson," exclaims St. Jerome, "yet all these three men fell." Wherefore, my soul, cherish continually a holy mistrust of yourself; never deem yourself secure, for never are you so near falling as when you think yourself farthest removed from it.

**3d.** Consider the height to which the apostles attained, and the proportionate depth to which Judas fell. They

rose so high because they persevered faithfully in the vocation for which God had chosen them, because they cooperated faithfully with the grace our Lord had given them; whereas Judas fell because he neglected his vocation, because his will was opposed to the will of God, because through theft and other sins he determinately struggled with and finally stifled grace in his soul. The option rests with you to follow the one or the other course. A great reward awaits those who can say with St. Peter: "Behold, we have left all things and have followed Thee." We are told that they who do so "shall receive an hundred-fold." (St. Matt. xix. 27.) "We have pledged ourselves to perform great things," says St. Francis, "but yet greater things are promised us. If we do not keep our vows, if, in defiance of the Apostle's warning, we neglect the grace which is given us, woe betide us; it would have been better for us to remain in the world, for then our punishment would have been lighter. To whom much is given from him shall much be required." Judas, who was so highly privileged, became a traitor, a prey to despair, whilst Dismas, the thief, to whose heart the voice of grace had but once appealed, had paradise promised to him. The greater the grace that is abused, the more severe will be the chastisement inflicted. Reflect upon this, and make your resolutions accordingly.

## **TUESDAY AFTER THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.**

**ON THE INSTRUCTIONS WHICH JESUS GAVE TO THE  
APOSTLES AFTER HE HAD CHOSEN THEM.**

Represent to yourself the twelve apostles, immediately after their election, standing around our Lord; they are animated on the one hand with holy joy at the favor bestowed on them, on the other with fear and trembling on account of the weighty responsibilities of their new office. Take your stand in spirit among these disciples, for you are

also, like the apostles, a follower of Christ; listen to and meditate upon the words He addresses to them.

**1st.** Consider how our Lord says to the twelve: "Beware of men." What a singular admonition! Shortly before He said to them: "Behold, I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves" (St. Matt. x. 16, 17); and yet He does not now warn them to beware of wolves, but of men, for the latter, like ravening, malicious wolves, will seek to dissuade and deter His disciples from following Him, and thus destroy the lambs that have already dedicated themselves to God as sacrificial victims. Had Judas heeded the warning to beware of men he would have remained with his Master and not made a covenant with the Pharisees; he would not have turned traitor. Had St. Peter been more mindful of this divine warning to beware of men, he would have avoided the company of the soldiers; he would not have denied his Lord. Nothing is more dangerous, more injurious for the Priest and more particularly the Religious than unnecessary association and intercourse with men, with the votaries of the world. Ask yourself how it was that when you filled this or that position, while you were in the novitiate, when you were in that particular convent, you found that you were able to pray with greater devotion, to meditate with more recollection, to celebrate holy Mass with increased fervor; why, in short, your temptations were fewer then than they are at present? The reason is this: because at that period, in that place you observed with greater fidelity our Lord's admonition, and the wise words of the author of the Imitation: "If thou wilt withdraw thyself from superfluous talk and idle visits, as also from giving ear to news and empty reports, thou wilt find time sufficient and proper to employ thyself in good meditations. The greatest of the saints avoided the company of men as much as they could, and rather chose to serve God in secret." (Imit. B. i. ch. 20.)

**2d.** "The brother also shall deliver up the brother to death and the father the son; the children also shall rise up against their parents." (v. 21.) In these words our Lord enunciates the new, the important truth, that the



perfect following of Christ requires the severance of the strongest ties, the ties of blood, the parting of those who are most closely united to one another. He who follows Jesus is dead to the world; he lives thenceforth only for Christ our Lord; in Him alone he sees father and mother, his brethren and his all. It must not however be thought that such a one ought to forswear all affection for his relatives, only he must, as St. Basil remarks, purify and refine this natural affection in the fire of divine charity. We ought to love our relatives as we love the dead, to think of them fondly and pray for them as we do for the departed, but to hold no further intercourse with them. A great deal depends, St. Basil says, on the avoidance of the society of relatives, since they have other views, other wishes, other aims than we have, who, like the apostles, ought to follow Christ wholly and solely; and thus an irremediable opposition exists between them and us, so that not unfrequently the father rises up against the son, and the brother against the sister; that is to say, they mutually endeavor to hinder one another in the attainment of the object to which they severally tend. Would that all Priests, all Religious more especially, would scrupulously observe this warning! St. Bernard, expounding the passage in St. Luke's gospel (ch. ii. 44, 45) "They sought Him amongst their kinsfolks and acquaintances and found Him not," says: "How could I possibly find Thee, O good Jesus, among my kindred, since Thou wert not found amongst Thine own kinsfolk?" Reflect upon the passage in the Hebrews wherein the Apostle speaks of one "without father, without mother, without genealogy." (ch. vii. 3.) "Whoso has said to his father and to his mother, I know you not; and to his brethren: I have no more to do with you, he has kept the word of the Lord and been faithful to His covenant."

**3d.** "You shall be hated of all men for My name's sake." (v. 22.) What a severe sentence! It is not enough for the true follower of Christ to withdraw from the turmoil of the world and renounce all intimate intercourse with men, it is not enough for him to sever the

closest bonds of blood and leave father and mother for Jesus' sake; he must do more, he must expose himself to be the object of universal hatred. The disciple of our Lord must brace himself to endure mockery and scorn, revilings and contempt, persecution and calumny for the name of Jesus. Is not that too much to expect of him? The sentence does, it is true, sound hard, but our Lord adds: "he that shall persevere unto the end shall be saved." (v. 22.) In such a reward as this all that He requires of His disciples may well be borne. Therefore, my soul, do not sigh thus heavily, looking only on the toil; look also on the recompense; do not regard the conflict alone, but also the crown of the victor. Listen to the words of the great ascetic: "Oh! hadst thou seen the everlasting crowns of the saints in heaven and in how great glory they now triumph who once appeared contemptible to this world, and even in a manner unworthy of life, doubtless thou wouldst presently humble thyself to the ground; neither wouldst thou covet the glad days of this life, but rather rejoice to suffer tribulation for God, and wouldst deem it thy greatest gain to be reputed as nothing amongst men." (Imit. B. iii. ch. 47.)

## WEDNESDAY AFTER THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE HEALING OF THE CENTURION'S SERVANT.

When our Lord came down from the mount whereon He had delivered His well-known sermon, He went to Capernaum. As soon as He entered that seaport town, the centurion in command of the Roman garrison met Him, and besought His mercy on behalf of his servant, who lay sick of the palsy. Keep this scene before your mind whilst you meditate on the following points:

**1st.** Consider the great affection of the centurion for his sick servant. He goes himself to obtain succor for

him, he applies in person to the Physician, to the greatest of physicians, to the One possessed of thaumaturgic powers; and having found this Physician, he is persistent in his entreaties and prayers to obtain relief for the servant who is sick of the palsy. Many Christians might learn a lesson from this heathen, a lesson of charity for and sympathy with the sick, especially for those who are their own dependents and members of their household. They might learn of this rough soldier to follow the precept of Holy Scripture: "Be not wanting in comforting them that weep, and walk with them that mourn. Be not slow to visit the sick, for by these things thou shalt be confirmed in love." (Ecclus. vii. 38, 39.) "Then shall the just," as we read in St. Matthew's gospel (ch. xxv. 39, 40), "answer, saying: Lord, when did we see Thee sick, and came to Thee? And the King answering shall say to them, Amen. I say to you as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me." What is your conduct, my soul, in this respect? St. Francis at one time made it a rule to admit no one into his Order who would not pledge himself to assist and nurse lepers; whereas you—perhaps calling yourself a son, a daughter of our seraphic Father, have so little charity for the sick, concern yourself so little about them that even a pagan centurion puts you to shame. Be henceforth more zealous on their behalf, and make it your serious resolve to remember in your prayers, your voluntary mortifications, the less fortunate of your fellow creatures who, whilst you are in good health and can enjoy your life, toss about on a sick-bed, groaning with pain and misery.

**2d.** Consider how modest and moderate in his demands is this Roman centurion. "I am not worthy," he says, "that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; but only say the word and my servant shall be healed." (St. Matt. viii. 8.) Coming before our Lord as a suppliant, he does not ask any extraordinary favor of Him; he does not require Him to put Himself to any great trouble on his account; he does not even desire that Jesus should go to

his house; he will be quite content if only the Lord will say a word and heal his servant in the ordinary way, according to His wonted method of procedure. Here again, my soul, you may learn a useful lesson from this heathen soldier, to be unassuming and moderate in your requirements, as every Christian, and more especially Religious, ought to be. Illness is a cross which our Lord lays upon us and which we ought to bear with great patience. This however invalids and sick persons do not do, who are dainty and particular in regard to what is given them to eat and drink, the medicine prescribed for them, the care and attention paid them. Even St. Bernard, a saint remarkable for his extreme charity, declaims against the sick who are so exacting; he writes thus: "What is the meaning of this, that in river and meadow, in garden and storeroom nothing can be found to suit thy palate? Remember, I pray thee, that thou art a monk, not a physician; that thou wilt have to render an account not of the state of thy body, but of the manner in which thou hast discharged the duties of thy Order." Reflect upon these words. Do not wilfully injure your health, but do not pamper your body, as do the children of this world.

**3d.** Consider what unbounded faith the centurion has in the divine Physician. "Only say the word," thus he expresses himself, "and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man subject to authority, having under me soldiers; and I say to this, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh, and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." (v. 9.) According to the exposition St. Augustine gives of this passage, the centurion's meaning is this: If I, myself a man bound to obey the orders of my superior officers, am nevertheless in a position to require implicit obedience from my subordinates, how much more wilt Thou be able to effect, since to Thee, as it appears, all men and all things are in subjection. As I command soldiers, so Thou dost command maladies and they are cured; Thou dost command the dead and they rise again; Thou dost command the storms and they cease.

How great this faith, how profound this confidence! Jesus Himself speaks of it with wonder and admiration. Consider, my soul, whether the rebuke our Lord added: "Amen, I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel" (v. 10), may not be applied to you. How despondent, how faint-hearted, how cast down you are in sickness, suffering and affliction! Ponder this well: The Christian, the Religious, who in sickness and tribulation submits with trustful confidence to the will of God and the orders of his Superior, who is to him in the place of God, gives general edification, like the centurion in the Gospel; whereas those only give scandal who after the manner of the children of the world manifest great anxiety and disquietude, and always seem to suspect that those around them are not sufficiently concerned about their restoration to health.

## THURSDAY AFTER THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE CONVERSION OF ST. MARY MAGDALEN.

Imagine that you see our Lord sitting at table in the house of one of the Pharisees, partaking of the banquet to which He had been invited. He is in the company of several Pharisees, who, though perhaps outwardly most friendly towards Him, are at heart malicious and crafty, and on the watch to discover something about their fellow Guest at which exception may be taken. Keep this scene before your eyes during your meditation.

**1st.** Observe that Jesus is present at this repast in compliance with the Pharisees' invitation, not so much for the purpose of partaking of material food as for the purpose of dispensing spiritual nourishment; not so much with the intention of appeasing His natural hunger and thirst as in order to satisfy His supernatural hunger and thirst for the salvation and sanctification of unhappy sinners.

The Pharisees on their part, in inviting our Lord to be their guest, were actuated less by motives of kindness and friendship than by the desire of profiting by this opportunity to observe His conduct more narrowly. From this incident, my soul, two things may be learnt: Do not readily accept invitations to worldly festivities and banquets, and if, as is often the case, you cannot decline them, only accept them as Jesus did, from the highest motives, for the sake of promoting the salvation of souls and of giving edification by your modesty and temperance, and your exemplary conversation. The second lesson to be learnt is this: The persons with whom you are brought into contact will observe you as closely as the Pharisees did our Lord, and here we may quote the words of Rodriguez: "In a man of the world," he says, "such is the low tone that prevails, a venial sin, or even in some cases a mortal sin is hardly remarked upon, but in a Religious, a beloved and favored child of God, the slightest stain strikes the eye. An attempt to put himself into prominence, a surly word, which would attract no notice in the case of seculars, is severely blamed in a Religious and often gives great scandal." Reflect upon this fact and make a special resolution for the guidance of your own conduct.

**2d.** Consider the appearance of St. Mary Magdalen on the scene. "While they were sitting at meat, behold a woman that was in the city, when she knew that Jesus was at meat in the Pharisees' house, went thither." (St. Luke vii. 37.) What an unwonted step to take! A young lady, of good family but of dissolute life, goes to the house of a Pharisee who is outwardly most godly and of strictest morality. She approaches the Holiest of the holy, One whom no man could convict of sin, and in the presence of all the guests she—long accustomed to be the object of admiration, flattery, homage—acknowledges herself to be a sinner and sheds tears of compunction. She throws herself on the ground before Him who is the source and fount of compassion, in order, as St. Gregory remarks, to cleanse herself from the stain of her hideous

impurity. She blushes not thus to humiliate herself in the sight of so many onlookers, for the intensity of her inward shame makes her count as nothing any outward shame and humiliation she may bring on herself. Meditate upon this, my soul; lay to heart both Magdalen's example and St. Gregory's comments on her conduct, and beware of false shame which may close your lips and deter you from sincerely confessing your fault, even in the tribunal of penance, especially if you have sinned be it in only the remotest and slightest degree. For, as St. Bonaventure writes, however trifling small offences against chastity may appear, we must be careful not to omit to mention them in confession. Such omissions have often been the germ of serious misdeeds, and the perdition of many souls may be traced to that source. Beware of this false shame, be open and outspoken, even more so than is requisite for the validity of confession, for this self-humiliation and conquest of pride is not unfrequently the means of overcoming the temptations of the flesh.

**3d.** Consider how sincere and thorough was Magdalen's conversion. She was not satisfied with this public, humiliating acknowledgment of her sin. "Standing behind," St. Luke tells us, "at His feet, she began to wash His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment." (v. 38.) Here again St. Gregory remarks: "With her eyes she had looked after the things of earth; now she humbles them by penance, for she weeps. Her hair had been elaborately dressed to enhance her charms; now with it she wipes away the tears she has shed. With the lips that uttered proud and boastful words she now kisses our Lord's feet. The ointment formerly employed to impart fragrance to her person is now turned to a laudable instead of a reprehensible use. All the enjoyments in which she revelled are given up, her vices are changed into virtues, and by penance she atones for her past guilt, and sacrifices to God those things by which she had offended Him."

Look into this mirror, my soul, and do penance in those matters wherein you have transgressed. It is for the sake of becoming a penitent that you left the world. Formerly you imposed no restraint on your senses; see that now you hold them in check; formerly, immersed in pleasures, you were dissipated and distracted; now recollect yourself in silence and seclusion; formerly you took delight in the enjoyment of good things, in rest and indolence; now apply yourself to mortification and labor; formerly you were, like the Magdalen, in sin; now become like to her in penance. "O wondrous spectacle!" cries the great Father of the Church, "whose heart will prove so hard, so stony, as not to be softened by the tears of this penitent sinner, not to be melted by them to compunction!" The saint could not believe such obduracy of heart to be possible; my soul, see that you do not prove him to have been mistaken in that belief.

## FRIDAY AFTER THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON MAGDALEN'S TEARS AND THE HARSH JUDGMENTS OF THE PHARISEES.

On this day, the weekly commemoration of our Lord's death, thousands, nay, millions of Christians turn their eyes to the cross, the hearts of some filled with love and compunction, of others with compassion and grief; and as they gaze on the cross of the Redeemer, beneath that cross they behold St. Mary Magdalen. She alone of all the women of Israel, she the sinner, whom the Pharisees despise and judge so rigorously, is privileged to associate herself with the Blessed Virgin and Mary of Cleophas, to stand by the cross, to embrace it, and testify her compassion with her dying Lord. The tears of compunction which she shed at His feet when He sat at meat earned for



her the right to shed tears of love at His feet when He hung upon the cross.

**1st.** Consider the words of the Evangelist: "Standing behind at His feet she began to wash His feet with tears." (St. Luke vii. 38.) Observe each word of this narrative. She stands behind our Lord because, recognizing her great sinfulness, she considers herself unworthy to appear before His divine countenance. Thus the humble and contrite come to the celestial Physician and cast themselves at His feet; those feet, the feet of the Good Shepherd who in His search after the lost sheep has endured weariness and pain; the same feet which bore the Saviour to Jacob's well, in order to give living water to the Samaritan; the same which have now carried Him to the Pharisee's house, for the purpose of "forgiving much" to her of whom it is said that she loved much. Scarcely has Magdalen placed herself at Jesus' feet than tears of contrition flow so freely, so copiously from her eyes that they stream like water upon those sacred feet. "Behold," exclaims St. Ambrose, "this new, this ingenious means of obtaining mercy! Not in words, but by her tears does she make confession of her sin. The usual order of things is reversed; rain comes down from heaven to fertilize the earth, but now the earth, hitherto accursed, whence Magdalen's sinful body was formed, brings forth an overflowing supply of water to fructify the heavens; nay more, what is far above the heavens; to produce the fruits of compassion in Him who is the Lord of all, the Creator of the heavens and the earth." O happy Magdalen, to be able to shed such tears! Who can look upon thee, a weeping, repentant sinner, without exclaiming in the words of the Prophet: "Feed me, O Lord, with the bread of tears, and give me to drink tears in measure."

**2d.** Consider how necessary it is for us all to shed tears of contrition, how indispensable is sorrow for sin, that holy compunction which, as we are told in the Imitation, opens the way to so much good. "Blessed are ye that weep now," the Scripture says (St. Luke vi. 21), and again: "Blessed are they that mourn" (St. Matt. v. 5),

those, that is, who mourn over their transgressions. "Of all manner of losses"—we quote the words of St. Chrysostom—"there is only one which can be made good by grief and sorrow, and that is the loss which a man suffers through sin. Consequently in the case of all else sorrow profits us nothing, in fact it tends rather to aggravate than alleviate our loss. But the loss caused by sin is completely repaired by sorrow for the sin we have committed." Ask yourself, my soul, how it is with you in regard to this salutary sorrow, this profitable grief, particularly when you go to confession. You often lament over the small measure of good you derive from your frequent confessions. You should rather lament over the small measure of contrition you bring to the sacred tribunal, for that is the cause of it. As the rain in the springtide of the year produces no real good until the soil whereon it falls is no longer hard and frost-bound, so that the moisture can permeate the ground thoroughly, so the dew of Heaven, divine grace, which is distilled upon your heart in the Sacrament of Penance, cannot exercise its fertilizing influence unless the soul is softened and melted by the tears of penitence, by that holy compunction of which the author of the Imitation says: "Give thyself to compunction of heart and thou shalt find devotion; since the reason why we have not divine consolations, or seldom experience them, is our own fault, because we do not seek compunction of heart." (B. i. ch. 21.)

**3d.** Consider the behavior of the Pharisees on the occasion of Magdalen's conversion. The proud Pharisee was unable to appreciate the mission of the Saviour, who came not to condemn, but to save. As St. Gregory remarks: "he reviled the patient for his sickness and the physician for the cure." If this woman had cast herself at the feet of the Pharisee, he would have repulsed her, for, having no real justice of his own, he would have thought that he would contract defilement from the sin of another. In this manner, the holy Pope proceeds to say, Priests, if they happen to have performed even the slightest act of virtue, are apt to despise those who are placed under

them and will not associate with the ordinary Christian, regarding him in the light of a sinner. God grant that you may not be deserving of this reproach, my soul. See how the Pharisee forms the only dark shadow in the otherwise bright picture of Magdalen's conversion. Do not imitate him, but imitate St. Ambrose, who in his work upon penance implores of God no gift more earnestly than the grace to have a tender and loving compassion for sinners. You are perhaps a Priest. Oh forget not that, "A Priest clad in his sacred vestments holds the place of Christ, to pray to God for himself and for all the people in a humble and suppliant manner. He wears the cross before him that he may bewail his own sins, and behind him that he may through compassion lament the sins of others; and know that he is appointed to stand between God and the sinner." (Imit. B. iv. ch. 5.) If you are a Religious, then remember that besides tears and penitential exercises on account of his own sins, nothing is more becoming to the monk than to weep and do penance for the sins of the world. This it is that renders the convent pleasing to God and a blessing to the world, which makes it a hallowed temple whence the cry for mercy ascends in like measure as the cry for vengeance goes up to Heaven from the dwellings of the ungodly.

## SATURDAY AFTER THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE MOTHER OF DOLORS AT THE TIME OF OUR LORD'S  
DEATH.

On this day, which is dedicated to the Mother of God, look once again on the Blessed Virgin. Picture her to yourself as she stands beneath the cross, and lifts her eyes, dimmed with tears, to her beloved Son. She has stood there beneath the cross of her only Son for three hours, like Him suffering and silent, with a courage which is

truly heroic, and a steadfast fortitude little short of the miraculous. But now the bitterest moment of all is approaching, the moment fraught with the intensest anguish a mother's heart can know; Jesus, her Son, is at the point of death. Keep this affecting scene before your mind while you consider the following points:

**1st.** Jesus when expiring bows His head. "When the loving Lord of life"—we quote from the narrative of Catharine Emmerich—"paid by His death the debt of suffering that sinners owed, when, as man, He commended His soul into the hands of His God and Father, and delivered His body into the power of death, the cold sweat of dissolution broke out on that sacred form mangled by blows; His body assumed the livid, ghastly hue of death; a shiver of agony convulsed His frame, His cheeks fell in, His features wore a pinched appearance, His blood-shot, blood-laden eyes opened once more ere they closed for ever; for the last time He raised His thorn-crowned head, and a few moments later, in the act of expiring, inclined it in the direction of His Mother." Here consider how individuals who are warmly attached to one another commonly take leave of one another with a silent, expressive look, a gentle inclination of the head. Now although our Lord had bestowed upon the world benefits so numerous, so inexpressibly great, yet those from whom He could take an affectionate farewell were few in number. Almost all those who stood around His cross were enemies, inveterate enemies. There was only one who watched His soul depart, one who clung to Him with an infinite, a tender, a maternal affection, the Blessed Virgin Mary. For her His parting salutation was principally meant, and she understood the love that the last motion of His divine head was intended to express. Ask yourself, my soul, whether, had you been standing upon Calvary, supposing yourself in the same spiritual state in which you now are, should you have been among the friends of Jesus, to whom He bade that last farewell?

**2d.** Consider what anguish that farewell caused to Mary. Alas, what did she part with at that moment? O

Mary, He who is thy life is dying, thy comfort is departing, thou art losing the chief object on which thy affection centres here below. What a painful farewell! Immerse yourself, my soul, during this hour of meditation, in the bitter ocean of your Mother's sorrows. What must she have felt, what must she have suffered when she beheld the Child expire whom she loved so fondly? If all the regions around Bethlehem resounded with lamentations when "Rachel wept for her children and refused to be comforted because they are not" (Jer. xxxi. 15); if David in his grief at the death of his son, the godless son who rebelled against him, exclaimed with tears: "O Absalom, my son, O my son!" (II. Kings xix. 4), judge what must have been the measure of the grief that most loving Mother felt at parting from the sweetest of sons. "At that instant," we read in the meditations of a contemplative, "the hands of His Mother seemed paralyzed, her eyes grew dim, a death-like pallor overspread her countenance, her limbs gave way beneath her, she sank to the ground"—in a swoon perhaps, the effect of her grief and anguish? No; although her soul was pierced, was cruelly torn by this parting, she bore this sorrow bravely for the love of God.

My soul, you too in consecrating yourself to God must bid farewell to the world and to all that you have ever held most dear; you must part from father and mother, brothers and sisters. That is most painful, most grievous to human nature. Or you have perhaps become attached to your surroundings, you love the convent in which you live, you are fond of your fellow Religious, you take a deep interest in the souls committed to your charge; all at once the order comes for you to go elsewhere, and you have to take leave of all. The parting is indeed painful, it costs you many a pang, but if this trial comes upon you, do not be cast down; look up to Mary and learn of her how to carry out the counsels of the great ascetic: "Sometimes it behooves thee to use violence, and manfully resist the sensitive appetite, nor to regard what the flesh likes and what it dislikes, but rather to

make it thy care that, even though unwilling, it may become subject to the spirit." (Imit. B. iii. ch. 11.)

**3d.** Consider how after Jesus' death Mary's heart no longer dwelt on earth, but there where her divine Son was; and how from that time forward the only longing, the sole desire of that heart was to be with Him where He had gone. For, as Holy Scripture says, "where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also" (St. Matt. vi. 21), and the Apostle, with the same holy yearning, exclaims: "I have a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ." (Phil. i. 23.) Such should be the longing, the yearning of your heart, my soul, after you have taken leave of the world. This is pre-eminently the mark of a true Priest, a true Religious, as St. Bonaventure observes, to be animated by so great, so ardent a love of God, as to be almost unable to live apart from Him and to desire nothing more fervently than to be released from the prison of the body in order to attain to the beatific vision of His divine countenance. Is that the case with you? How would you meet death if it came to you to-day, if it came now? Should you be dismayed, and consider that it had come too soon? If so, you are no true Religious, for when brought face to face with death, the pious monk ought to be ready to exclaim joyfully as St. Francis did: "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name; the just wait for me until Thou reward me." (Ps. cxli. 8.)

## THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

Place before your mind's eye the picture which the Gospel for the day presents to view. A Pharisee is standing in the temple, standing forward boldly in God's sight as a just man, a devout man, but as our Lord says, not "justified." Far behind him, just at the entrance of the temple, there stands a publican, who will not so much as lift up

his eyes towards Heaven, who considers himself and confesses himself to be a sinner and unjust; yet according to the testimony of the omniscient Judge Himself, that man is "justified."

**1st.** Consider the arrogance of the Pharisee. He stands before God, erect and unbending as if he were Lord, and God were his underling, and he imagines he can do nothing better than lift up his voice to praise and magnify—not Him to whom all honor and glory is due—but his own self. "O God, I give Thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is this publican. I fast twice in a week; I give tithes of all that I possess." (St. Luke xviii. 11, 12.) So runs this singular prayer that the Pharisee utters, in reference to which St. Basil cries: "A fine prayer that, a pretty thanksgiving! He condemns the world, he judges the world, he comes to this conclusion: 'I am not as the rest of men, I alone am just, all the others are ungodly.' What revolting conceit, what disgusting boastfulness!" Learn from this example to despise this fault from the bottom of your heart, and take good heed never to extol yourself, or justify yourself. Self-praise is no praise, says the proverb. "Let another praise thee, and not thy own mouth, a stranger and not thy own lips." (Prov. xxvii. 2.) Such is the counsel of the Wise Man; and St. Bonaventure says: "Know that it is hardly possible for you to possess some good quality without others being aware of it. If you never mention it, those who know you will love you all the better for your silence, and they will praise you doubly both on account of your estimable quality and also for your modesty. But if you call attention to it, you will only be ridiculed; instead of being an object of esteem, a source of edification to others, they will only dislike and despise you." Lay to heart these words, which are worthy to be inscribed in letters of gold.

**2d.** Consider the humility of the publican. He regards himself as nothing in the sight of God. He only sees in himself sin and misery; he remains standing afar off; he strikes his breast, saying: "O God, be merciful to me

a sinner." (v. 13.) That is a prayer of a very different character. In it man speaks to God; it is a sincere acknowledgment of guilt, a confession well pleasing to the Most High. It is dictated by that humility which, as St. Chrysostom remarks, caused the publican to be saved rather than the Pharisee, and gained for the good thief admittance into paradise before the apostles. Learn to-day, my soul, from the publican to ascend that first degree of humility, which, according to St. Albert the Great, requires us to make ourselves acquainted with our own frailty and poverty, and not merely to apprehend how weak, how impotent we are of ourselves, but also how deplorable would be our condition if Almighty God did not come to our assistance in seasons of temptation. "If God had given that thief as much grace as He has given me, he would be a better man than I am," once said the great, the humble St. Francis, who valued himself as meanly as he valued divine grace highly. This opinion of oneself, this exercise of humility is pre-eminently to be recommended to those whom God has led from a sinful life in the world to the way of penance and perfection, and who often have cause to cry out with the prophet: "Unless the Lord had been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell." (Ps. xciii. 17.) Has such been your conduct hitherto, my soul? If not, be admonished by the words of the great ascetic: "Never think that thou hast made any progress till thou look upon thyself as inferior to all." (Imit. B. ii. ch. 2.)

**3d.** Consider the sentence God passes upon the two men in the temple. "This man (the publican) went down into his house justified rather than the other." (St. Luke xviii. 14.) That is what God says of them. St. Bernard asserts that the Pharisee went home destitute of grace, because he flattered himself that he possessed a plentitude of grace. The publican, on the other hand, went down to his house with gifts of grace all the more rich and abundant, because being devoid of self-conceit, he brought an empty vessel to the fount of heavenly mercy; "because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he



that humbleth himself shall be exalted." This is a truth which experience confirms a thousand times over. Listen to the eloquent words of St. Augustine on this subject, and meditate upon them. "O sacred humility," he exclaims, "how opposed thou art to pride! Pride, my brethren, caused Lucifer to fall from Heaven, while humility induced the Son of God to become man. Pride drove Adam out of the earthly paradise, while humility admitted the good thief into the celestial paradise. Pride brought about confusion of tongues in the days when there were giants upon the earth, while humility united into one the nations that were dispersed. Through pride Nabuchodonosor was degraded to the condition of a brute beast, while through humility Joseph became one of the princes of Egypt." If, my soul, you desire to rise from this meditation "justified" like the publican, humble yourself, and reflect in what particular manner you will from this day forth practise the virtue of humility.

## MONDAY AFTER THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON JESUS' VISIT TO MARTHA'S HOUSE.

Fix your eyes in imagination on the pleasing scene which St. Luke depicts in his gospel (ch. x. 38-42.) He shows us Jesus present as a Guest, a divine Guest, in the house where the two pious sisters of Lazarus live. At the Lord's feet Mary is seated, Mary the contemplative, whose soul delights in recollection and reflection; with holy eagerness she hangs on the lips of the divine Teacher, whilst Martha, who is fully occupied, draws near and complains that her sister affords her no assistance in preparing a repast for their beloved and honored Guest. Let this scene be present to your mind during your meditation.

**1st.** Both these sisters love Jesus, both respect Him,

both seek to show Him every attention, each however in her own way; Mary by remaining quietly seated at the Master's feet, Martha by busying herself in preparing a suitable entertainment for Him. Our Lord praises Mary's part, but Martha is not to be blamed, for without her there would have been nothing to set before Jesus. Thus these two sisters represent the two states, the contemplative and the active life. Both are good in themselves and can exist in harmony side by side. You of all others, who are a Priest, a Religious, a Christian aspiring to perfection, ought to combine these two modes of life; you ought to be active, without thereby losing, amid the pressure of the occupations of your calling, the spirit of meditation and contemplation; whilst on the other hand, you ought to devote yourself to mental prayer without allowing this to interfere in any way with the due performance of the duties of your state or the salvation of souls. St. Francis, our seraphic Father, lays great stress upon this in his exhortations. He declaims in forcible terms against those who, neglecting mental prayer and meditation, give themselves up to external works and secular studies; yet, on the other hand, when he observed that a certain Brother devoted his time too exclusively to contemplation, he at once said to him: "Brother, the other monks have received from God the gift of mental prayer in a far higher degree than thou hast; it is therefore only fitting that thou shouldst serve in the kitchen, or mind the door, so as to give them more opportunity for the exercise of that gift." How is it with you, O reader? Perhaps you are careless in respect to both of these conditions; examine yourself on this point before proceeding further.

**2d.** Consider Jesus' words: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things." (St. Luke x. 41.) Consider that our Lord does not tell Martha that she ought not to prepare a repast for Him, He does not blame her for employing herself in that manner; He blames the undue solicitude she displays, and particularly for being "troubled about many things." In the active

life, St. Gregory says, we must beware of excessive anxiety, and whilst performing our work, must look up with a tranquil heart to God, to whom all actions should be consecrated. Here we have the solution of the problem how to combine the two states of life. Pursue your avocations, be actively employed, but see that you do not thereby lose your serenity, the spirit of recollection, the constant remembrance of God's presence. Cassian, speaking of the anchorites and hermits of bygone times, says that they did not desist from contemplation even while they were at work, and when their hands were busily employed after the fashion of Martha, their hearts were occupied, like Mary, in the exercises of the spiritual life. And when St. John Climacus once asked a Brother how it was that he who had to cook for nine hundred monks every day was yet seen to be always recollected and frequently to shed tears of devotion, the Brother replied: "I keep constantly before my mind that I am serving God and not man, and my tears are due to this, that the sight of the large fire in the kitchen reminds me of the fire that never will be quenched." My soul, are you thus serene and recollected amid your occupations? Listen once more to our Lord's words: "Martha, Martha, thou art troubled about many things."

3d. Consider that Jesus said: "Mary hath chosen the best part." He who is Eternal Truth has thus by His own lips declared that to be the best and most perfect state which is symbolized by Mary, the contemplative life. For this a very special vocation is required, and happy those on whom that precious gift is bestowed! It is described by Brother Giles, the favorite disciple of our Seraphic Father, in the following manner: "It is a divine flame, a fervor of devotion inspired by the Holy Ghost, a rapture, an elevation of the mind, which in mental prayer is inebriated with ineffable delight in the enjoyment of the divine sweetness; it is a calm, a happy, a joyful posture of the soul, wherein the soul, fascinated and enraptured, is absorbed in wondering admiration of divine things." Wherefore prize highly this inestimable gift,

and in as far as is possible, cultivate mental prayer; at least once in the day withdraw from all your Martha-like avocations, and sit with Mary in tranquil meditation at Jesus' feet; for as He said to Martha: "but one thing is necessary." Apply this admonition to yourself.

## TUESDAY AFTER THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE WOMAN WHO PRAISED OUR LORD PUBLICLY.

It is an animated scene that you are called upon to place before your mind to-day. Whilst Jesus is making His way through a vast crowd of people and the Pharisees are insulting Him, calling Him a servant of the devil, a woman's voice is suddenly heard to cry aloud: "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck." (St. Luke xi. 27.) How extremely annoying this public and well-merited praise must have been to the Pharisees!

**1st.** Consider the uncharitable judgments of the Pharisees. Jesus had just cast out a devil from one who was dumb, and these Pharisees could find nothing else to say of this act than: "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils." (v. 15.) What a shameful blasphemy! They impute blame to the Holiest of the holy for working a miracle, for performing an act of charity with which no work done by the agency of devils could compare. They give the worst of names to the best of actions. Let this show you, my soul, how hideous, how abominable evil-speaking is, and uncharitable judgment of others, and take heed lest you fall into this fault for which the Pharisees were remarkable. Alas, how many Priests and Religious there are who are swift to put a bad construction upon the best, or at any rate the most well-meant actions of their Brethren and Sisters, and pass on them a rash and uncharitable judgment! Listen to

what St. Francis says on this point: "What does a Religious do when he finds fault with his Brethren and complains of his Superior? He does nothing short of spreading gall in the bosom of his mother, the Order of which he is a member." Then the seraphic saint proceeds to bewail the fact that the slanderers, who set themselves up to judge the moral conduct of others, are themselves almost invariably hypocrites, men greedy of fame, or contemptible sycophants; that they wish to appear virtuous without striving to acquire virtue; that they accuse others and will not correct their own faults; that they judge everything and condemn freely, but will not allow any stricture to be passed on their conduct. "By their perpetual fault-finding," the saint concludes, "they resemble dogs that are always barking and biting; they gnaw at the very heart of their neighbors." This is forcible language; lay to heart the saint's words; apply them to yourself, and not to those around you.

**2d.** Consider that the woman made amends for the wrong the Pharisees did to our Lord. They had just been abusing and slandering Him in the most shameful manner; now she extols Him publicly and highly. "Blessed," she exclaims, "is the womb that bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck;" and this she says in a loud voice before all the people, in order that they, who have just heard the unjust and calumnious verdict of the Pharisees, may now hear what may justly and truly be said in praise of Him whom they slandered. Learn of this woman, my soul, to take the part of one who is reviled and misjudged, and counteract the unmerited blame, the uncharitable judgment of your neighbor by saying what you can in his praise and justification. Above all never tolerate slander and uncharitable conversation in your presence. "There is no room at my table for him who delights in abusing the absent"; such were the words St. Augustine caused to be inscribed on the walls of his dining-room. "Hedge in thy ear with thorns, hear not a wicked tongue" (Ecclus. xxviii. 28), we read in Holy Scripture; and St. Jerome says: "If you hear any one backbiting

another, dismiss him from your presence, and avoid him for the future as you would a viper, in order that for very shame he may learn not to censure the actions of others." If your eloquent silence does not suffice to shut the mouth of the slanderer, let the example of the woman in the Gospel teach you when to speak, and how to speak.

**3d.** Consider the virtues manifested by this woman who lifts up her voice in praise of our Lord. It is charity, in the first place, that urges her to do honor to Jesus when He is defamed, and a sense of justice also compels her to speak the truth and give the lie to the slanderer. Thus you ought not to keep silence, but speak up in behalf of your neighbor when charity and justice demand that you do so. But in that case speak with prudence and moderation as this woman did. Mark how she praises Jesus without saying a word in direct blame of His adversaries, for it is mere folly to extinguish a fire with one hand and with the other to rekindle the flames; to defend the person attacked and at the same time assail a third party with heat and virulence. A few calm, forcible words are generally all that is needed to silence the malicious tongue; Holy Scripture says: "The north wind driveth away rain, as doth a sad countenance a backbiting tongue." (Prov. xxv. 23.) If you have hitherto failed in this respect, my soul, examine yourself whether it was owing to want of charity or of a sense of justice, or whether your indiscreet and intemperate defence has done more harm than good. Let the special resolution you form be determined by your answer to this query, and both you and your neighbor will be benefited by it.

## WEDNESDAY AFTER THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE EULOGIUM PRONOUNCED BY THE WOMAN IN ITS  
BEARING ON OUR LORD.

It must have required great courage on the part of the woman in the Gospel to brave as she did the displeasure of the powerful Pharisees, and speak openly and loudly in praise of one whom they persecuted and hated so bitterly. Hence it may be assumed that this woman did not speak of her own accord, but was impelled by a higher power, the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. In fact the deep significance of the laudatory words themselves, proves them to have been dictated by a supernatural influence.

**1st.** Consider that the eulogium pronounced by the woman has reference principally to our Lord's incarnation, according to the exposition of the Ven. Bede. He says: "While the Scribes and Pharisees blasphemed, this woman proclaimed the doctrine of our Lord's incarnation with assured confidence." This woman—one of the common people—magnifies the very mystery which was incomprehensible to the proud Pharisees, the divine origin of Jesus Christ; for it was precisely this doctrine—to which the faithful clung with tender love and adoration—which was a stone of stumbling to the Pharisees. Their pride rebelled against the idea that the Nazarene, the carpenter's Son, with the poverty of whose supposed father, the still greater poverty of whose Mother they were well aware, could be invested with such supreme dignity. Now while they, the sages, the great ones of the people, reviled the God made man, from the depth of a simple, humble, gladsome heart there ascends a tribute of praise in honor of our Lord's incarnation. Thus it has been in all ages. Only the humble of heart can understand this mystery of humility, only childlike souls can take delight in the Child

who is the offspring of Mary's womb. Endeavor yourself to be always a child, in the sense in which this woman was, "for of such is the kingdom of God." Cherish for the wondrous mystery of the incarnation, which the Angelus bell recalls to your mind three times a day, the same love and veneration which the simple, childlike St. Francis entertained for it. On one occasion, carried away by holy rapture, he exclaimed: "Not only do I think that on the day when the Son of God was born into the world for our salvation, all mankind ought to eat meat, but I could wish that the princes of the earth would send out meat and corn on to the highways, in order that the birds of the air and the beasts of the field might in their fashion participate in the joy of this great festival." See how this saint rejoiced in this sacred mystery. Why are you not inspired by a like joy?

**2d.** Consider how the eulogium pronounced by the woman bears directly upon Mary, and indirectly upon Jesus. For it is impossible to glorify Mary without thereby magnifying Jesus. If our Lord Himself said: "As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me" (St. Matt. xxv. 40), can it be that what we do to His Mother, to her than whom no being was dearer to Him upon earth, is not done to Him? St. Bernard, speaking of the false notion of those who imagine that the homage paid to Mary detracts from the honor paid to Christ, expresses himself thus eloquently: "Is this fear reasonable? Is it Christian? Is it natural? Is it in human nature that a son should be jealous of the esteem in which his mother is held? Would a son think himself more honored if his mother were neglected and set aside, in order that honor should be shown exclusively to him? Would you deny to our divine Lord, looking at Him merely as a man, the first and greatest of all attributes, divine charity? How inconceivable this is! They profess to be seeking for Jesus, and as the surest means of finding Him they turn their backs on Mary! In order to love her Son more they withdraw their affection from His Mother, just as if the love of Jesus and the love of



Mary were incompatible." Weigh well this saint's words, my soul, and you will perceive that not only the woman in the Gospel, but every one else who loves and honors Mary, loves and honors Christ.

3d. Consider how the woman, in praising Mary, extols above all the divine grace so freely bestowed upon the Blessed Virgin. It is not without purpose that in this tribute of praise the word "blessed" comes first; usually the person is named first, and the predicate follows, but in this case the order is reversed, with the intention of demonstrating that what is to be marvelled at, to be admired in Mary above all is divine, sanctifying grace. St. John Damascene remarks on this subject: "All in Mary was sanctified by the grace of God, hence her womb is said to be blessed and her breasts are said to be blessed, because she was sanctified beforehand, in order to render her worthy to conceive the eternal Son of God, and to afford nourishment to His sacred humanity." To glorify Mary is to glorify the grace of God, which, in the words of the Church, prepared her body and soul to be a fit dwelling for Christ. "For," as St. Athanasius says, "the Holy Spirit penetrated the womb of the Blessed Virgin with all the powers inseparable from His divine person, and, so to speak, filled her so completely with the fertilizing influence of His grace that she was *plena gratia*, full of grace." Thus in this respect likewise the eulogium uttered by the woman in the Gospel, and which you repeat so frequently, nay daily at the close of your breviary, relates to Christ Himself, for whose sake Mary was so highly favored. Wherefore laud and magnify in Mary that divine grace, which, though its effects are visible in all the saints, nowhere shines forth with such beauty, such abundance, such wondrous power as in the Virgin who was "full of grace."

## THURSDAY AFTER THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE EULOGIUM PRONOUNCED BY THE WOMAN IN ITS  
RELATION TO OUR LADY.

Imagine that it is given to you to see the Blessed Virgin, standing on the threshold of Elizabeth's house in heavenly rapture, her countenance beaming with a radiance which is not of earth, while she utters the prophecy wherewith we are all so familiar: "From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." (St. Luke i. 48.) This prediction meets with its primary fulfilment on the occasion which forms the subject of the present meditation.

**1st.** Consider that now for the first time that praise which Mary's prophetic spirit foresaw would be her portion is loudly and publicly proclaimed. "Happy is the Mother who gave Thee birth," the woman in the Gospel exclaimed, and this ejaculation has been re-echoed in all times, in all climes, throughout the whole Church, with the same rapturous delight for nineteen centuries. "Blessed is the womb of the Virgin Mary that bore the Son of the Eternal Father; blessed are the breasts that gave suck to Christ our Lord." Thus Mary's prediction is fulfilled. All generations of mankind extol her. All ages, all lands, all nations proclaim her praise. There is not a single Father of the Church, not a single theologian whose writings, whose discourses do not speak of Mary with fervent affection; we meet with no church, no cathedral, no chapel where there is not an image of Mary exposed for veneration. St. Ephrem, in his delight at this vast, this universal tribute of adoration paid to the Mother of God, exclaims: "O immaculate Virgin, consummate in virtue, rich in renown! Thou art encircled by an aureola brighter than the sun, thou art crowned with

greater glory than the cherubim, higher sanctity than the seraphim, thou art exalted above all the blessed denizens of heaven." Meditate attentively, my soul, on the great, the universal, the unceasing veneration paid to Mary, inaugurated by the eulogium of this woman and continued up to the present time.

2d. Consider your own love and veneration for the Blessed Virgin. You call her your Mother, your Queen, your Consoler and Protector, and indeed she is all this to you. But observe that these names require you to offer her the whole love and devotion of your heart. Do you render her what is due to her? In what manner do you recite the Hours? Are the wreaths—the rosaries—which you lay at her feet, fresh and fragrant or faded and withered? Remember how a voice once spoke from the cross, a voice that still speaks to you, saying: "Behold thy Mother," "*Ecce Mater tua.*" The dying Redeemer had, in the excess of His divine charity, already given all to us; He had given His grace, His light, the Bread of Heaven to those who believed in Him; He had offered up His own life for His friends, and at last, to crown all the blessings His love had bestowed on us, He gave us His Mother. And in very truth she is our Mother. "He who follows Mary," says St. Bernard, "will not go astray and will not fall into despair. Give her thy hand, and she will hold thee up; she will protect thee and thy footsteps shall not falter. Under her maternal guidance fear no trouble; under her guardianship thy bark will not be wrecked." Wherefore "behold thy Mother," and from henceforth display more love, deeper veneration for her than heretofore; and if you are a son, a daughter of our Seraphic Father, forget not the ardent, the tender love of that saint for Mary; remember how he placed his Order under her patronage, how he chose her for his intercessor, how after Christ, he reposed in her his greatest trust. If your Father acted thus do you imitate him. "If you be the children of Abraham, do the works of Abraham," our Lord once said to those who boasted that they were the descendants of that great patriarch.

**3d.** Consider the answer our Lord made to the woman's tribute of praise: "Yea, rather blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it." (St. Luke xi. 28.) In saying this He does not declare the laudatory exclamation of the woman to be unjust or ill-timed; on the contrary He emphasizes it, for in these words He gives the principal reason why Mary is to be called blessed. She is blessed, as Albertus Magnus says, because of her obedience, because of her faithful adherence to and fulfilment of the word of God. "Mary is more blessed," writes St. Augustine, "through receiving the faith of Christ than through conceiving the humanity of Christ; her divine maternity of itself would have profited her nothing had she not borne Christ in her heart as well as in her womb." "Had she not," we quote the words of St. Chrysostom, "been eminent in virtue and in faith, it would have been of little avail to her to have given birth to our Lord." You, my soul, frequently invoke the aid of Mary, you implore her to support you on the path of salvation. From this time forth do not omit to pray her to obtain for you the grace to keep and to fulfil the Word of God which you hear daily; make a resolution to give this practical proof of your devotion to Mary, your desire to imitate her, for only by doing thus will you deserve to be called blessed.

## FRIDAY AFTER THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE LOVE OF JESUS CRUCIFIED FOR MAN.

To-day the return of Friday again calls on you to contemplate the bitter Passion and death of Jesus Christ upon the cross. Raise your eyes therefore to the cross and there behold your dying Saviour; see His pitiable condition; He is covered with blood and wounds, racked with pain, in the agony of death, overwhelmed with grief and

woe. Do you not perceive that in the moment of expiring He thinks of you; do you not hear His pallid lips speaking to you; can you resist the testimony of His pierced heart which says to you: "Behold how exceedingly I have loved mankind!" Launch out in thought on this ocean of love, the love of our crucified Lord for us, and meditate upon it attentively.

**1st.** In legendary lore we find the story of a king who was sick unto death. The skill of the physicians was powerless to arrest the disease; the life of the royal sufferer gradually ebbed away. Then another physician came who assured him that he would recover if a heart, fresh from a human body, were given to him. But where could the king obtain that remedy, unless by putting some one to death? In this moment of perplexity the queen voluntarily offered to supply the required remedy at the cost of her own life. This generous offer was not accepted, but the love which prompted it acted so powerfully upon the patient that it proved the best of medicine and actually effected his cure. The love that could make such a sacrifice was indeed great, but what was it in comparison with that of the crucified Redeemer? The queen offered her heart, her life, in will; our Lord offered His in deed; the queen was willing to make the sacrifice on behalf of a beloved consort; our Lord made the sacrifice of Himself for His foes, His murderers. O love unspeakable! Who can wonder that when meditating upon it our Seraphic Father St. Francis exclaimed in holy rapture: "Jesus Christ, my love, is crucified!" No, do not wonder at that; what should cause you real surprise is this, that you are so cold, so insensible to this love, that you will not give your whole heart to Him who gave His life for you, that you will not sacrifice to Him the corrupt inclinations of that heart.

**2d.** Consider how highly the ancients extolled the affection of the servant who, in order to save his master's life at the sacrifice of his own, when the former was threatened with death, personated him and thus fell under the assassin's sword. How deeply touched and affected his

lord, who thus escaped death, must have been at such a proof of devoted affection! But what is this love, which we deem so amazing, compared with the love of the crucified Redeemer? The servant gave his life for his master, who had doubtless conferred many benefits upon him; our crucified Lord offered His life for subjects who had rebelled against Him, their Monarch. The servant suffered a speedy death for the sake of the master he loved, to whom he owed much, whereas our crucified Lord endured a death of ignominy and protracted torture on behalf of servants who were guilty of the blackest ingratitude towards Him, their Lord, their Father, their Creator. O love surpassing all other love! Can it be true, can it be possible that you make no return of love to this God of love? Why is God compelled actually to command you to love Him, who first so loved you? St. Augustine exclaims in astonishment that such a precept should be necessary: "Lord, Thou commandest me to love Thee, and if I fail to do so, Thy wrath is kindled against me, and Thou threatenest me with terrible penalties; as though it were not in itself misery enough not to love Thee!"

**3d.** Consider how great was the love which Alphonsus, the far-famed king of Aragon, showed to one of his soldiers. This man, one day, while crossing a river, fell from his horse and was in great danger of drowning. Seeing that none of his comrades went to his assistance, for they were all afraid lest the force of the current should carry them away, the king spurred his horse into the river, and at the risk of his own life succeeded in rescuing the man, who was only a common soldier. That was truly royal generosity, a deed of heroic magnanimity! What words can describe the gratitude of the soldier, his enthusiastic devotion to his rescuer, the earnest longing he felt for an opportunity of repaying so charitable an act in some manner, even at the cost of his life. Now reflect upon this, my soul: The king showed this charity to a fellow man, one of the same flesh and blood as himself, whereas the charity of our crucified Lord is the charity of the Creator, whose greatness is infinite, towards His

sinful creatures. The king put his life in jeopardy for a soldier, who had done the same on countless occasions for his monarch, whereas our crucified Lord offered His life for those who had outraged and insulted Him. The king rescued from a watery grave a mortal man who must die sooner or later, whereas our crucified Lord rescues from the flames of hell the whole of mankind, who otherwise would be doomed to eternal perdition. Who can conceive such love? Who on the other hand can conceive the poor return you make for that love? You, a Priest, who are daily privileged to lean on the Saviour's breast; you, a Religious, who daily in your mental prayer look into the depths of the ocean of divine love, are nevertheless so cold, so indifferent—oh, blush with shame, and with fervent contrition of heart pray in the words of the seraphic saint: "Grant, O Lord, that the sweetness and force of Thy ardent love may detach me from all that is earthly and may make of me a holocaust of charity"; or in the words of St. Augustine: "If, O my God, I do not love Thee enough, grant that I may increase in Thy love. My God, who art Thyself all love, kindle in me the fire of Thy love."

## SATURDAY AFTER THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON A GOOD DEATH.

Imagine yourself dangerously ill, lying on your bed, near unto death, holding clasped in your hands the image of Jesus crucified, whose love for man formed the subject of yesterday's meditation. In a few short moments you will have to appear before Him, and give account of the use you have made of the love He has shown you. What would your feelings be in such a case? You are a Priest, a Religious. The world, when it hears of your death, will say with a sigh: "Blessed are the dead who

die in the Lord" (Acts xiv. 13), "as that man doubtless died." Yes, they are indeed blessed who die in the Lord, but the privilege of a death blessed in the Lord is only the portion of those whose life has been blessed in the Lord. This alone renders those things easy which generally render death hard and difficult.

**1st.** Consider that it is an easy matter for the Christian to take leave of this world. As a Christian, as one who lived in the Lord, his heart never clung closely to the world; he only regarded it as a place of exile, as a valley of tears and of suffering. He owned none of its good things, the loss of which would now grieve him; he shared in none of its pleasures, the cessation of which he would now regret; what he had that appertained to it he possessed as though he possessed it not. Happy he when the hour of his death comes. It is no grief to him, but joy, real happiness to bid farewell to the world; death is a messenger come to release him from the land of his banishment, where he ever felt himself ill at ease and an alien.

Ask yourself, my soul, what are your sentiments in this respect? Are these words applicable to you? If not, if you are conscious that you would feel very differently if you were now called upon to depart this life, see that from henceforth you follow more closely the counsel of the Imitation of Christ: "Keep thyself as a pilgrim and a stranger upon earth, to whom the affairs of this world do not at all belong. Keep thy heart free and raised upwards towards God, because thou hast here no abiding city."

**2d.** Consider how for those who die in the Lord the separation from relatives and friends is easy. The true Priest and Religious will long ago have detached his heart from them, he will long ago have become spiritually dead to them; and even as regards his natural affection for those who are united to him by the ties of blood or of friendship, death will be a matter of rejoicing, since he thinks and hopes that if he die in the Lord, he will after death be more than ever able to be of service to



them and obtain blessings for them. Perhaps many prayers which he as a sinful man sent up to God on their behalf were not answered; perhaps the strenuous efforts he made for their spiritual welfare produced no effect, but when he stands in the immediate presence of God, in blissful union with Him, his prayers will not be fruitless, his intercession will not be in vain. Then indeed will many a seed that has lain long in the earth, that was thought to be dead, spring up and bear fruit. That will be the reward of one who for the love of God has sacrificed his natural love of his relatives; now the sight of them does not make death difficult, but easy. Do you, my soul, enter into these feelings, or would your experience be otherwise were you now to die? It seems that you have not as yet left all, that you are not yet entirely dead to the world. David says: "My soul hath thirsted after the strong, living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?" (Ps. xli. 3.) If you are conscious that you could not in the presence of death take these words of the Psalmist on your lips, O search your own heart, ascertain who it is to whom your heart yet clings, since it shrinks from the final blow which will sever it from this world.

**3d.** Consider that to those who live in the Lord the separation of soul and body will not be hard. Whereas for those who have not thus lived, when the moment comes for soul and body to part, a severe and painful struggle ensues; whereas the soul of the carnally minded clings tenaciously to the body in which it has taken delight, whose slave that unhappy soul has been, on the other hand this separation is for the soul of the good Priest, the mortified Religious, the devout Christian only the striking off of the fetters that still bind it to earth. As a dove, caged in some sunless place, if it be set at liberty by a kindly hand, spreads its wings in gladsome flight, so the soul of one who has lived in the Lord willingly detaches herself from the body. She has long regarded that body only as an adversary and an antagonist; she has separated herself from it as far as possible by austerities

and mortifications; and by this very hostility she has shown herself its best friend, for now after a short period of suffering it will be made participator of her eternal rest. Now ask yourself, my soul, would it be so in your case, if you were now to die? If not, oh shake yourself more than ever free from the bonds of the flesh, which you have hitherto treated too tenderly. Imitate our holy Father St. Francis, who regarded his body merely as a prison-house; chastise it, as he did his, that you may, like him, quit it with perfect facility. Remember a Priest, a Religious, who has not learnt how to die, who cannot lie down to rest at night without trembling at the thought that death may perhaps overtake him in his sleep, has not lived up to his vocation. Wherefore let your resolution to-day be to follow more closely this precious admonition, so that when death comes to you you may die blessed in the Lord: "In the morning think thou wilt not come to evening; and at evening dare not promise thyself the morning. Be therefore always ready, and live in such wise that death may never find thee unprepared." (Imit. B. i. ch. 23.) Reflect upon this truth: That Religious is a perfect Religious who when asked, What art thou? answers: A dying man.

## THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE DEAF AND DUMB MAN IN THE GOSPEL.

Place before you the touching picture which the Gospel of the day presents to your view. The deaf and dumb man stands before the divine Redeemer; he looks on that heavenly Physician so hopefully, with such a mute appeal for compassion, that He who has power to give speech to the dumb and hearing to the deaf consents to display His miraculous might on his behalf, and stretches out His

hand to cure him. Keep this scene before your mind during your meditation.

**1st.** The Evangelist tells us that "looking up to Heaven, He groaned." (St. Mark vii. 34.) This groan our Lord utters has a deep signification. When He sees before Him this unfortunate individual, destitute of speech and of hearing, there rises, as St. Chrysostom says, before His omniscient mind, that sublime moment when the hand of the triune God fashioned Adam's body out of the dust of the earth to His own image and likeness. He sees human nature in its original beauty, He reflects upon the lofty aim for which Almighty God framed the senses of that wondrously constructed body; the eye, made to gaze upon the loveliness of creation, the ear marvelously adapted to hear and appreciate the sweet mysterious music of nature, otherwise dead and voiceless; the sense of smell, given to man that he might not only, with the sense of sight, behold with delight the fair colors in which the earth is decked, but inhale her invigorating fragrance. In short, once again He beholds in spirit man arrayed in his primeval beauty, gifted with his splendid endowments; and now there stands before Him a specimen of humanity who is a living image of the profound degradation, the utter misery to which sin and Satan have reduced human nature. This misfortune has come upon mankind in consequence of the abuse of the senses. As soon as Eve's eye looked with longing at the forbidden fruit, as soon as she culpably lent her ear to the voice of the tempter, and for the gratification of her taste in an unlawful manner stretched out her hand to take the apple, by misuse of the senses death became the inevitable lot of mankind, and from that time forward the earth resounded with the cry of woe that arose from the blind and lame; it was moistened by the tears shed by the deaf and dumb. Beholding the havoc wrought by sin in human nature, once so glorious, Jesus groaned. Meditate attentively, my soul, upon this truth, impress it deeply upon your soul, that by so doing you may acquire on the one hand a greater

abhorrence of sin which has wrought such harm, and on the other a greater love for those exercises of mortification which your corrupt nature renders necessary, or which are prescribed by the Rule of your Order.

**2d.** Consider the manner in which our Lord healed the deaf-mute. "And taking him from the multitude apart, He put His fingers into his ears, and spitting touched his tongue." (v. 33.) This peculiar method of healing is not without its meaning. As the deaf-mute represents unhappy humanity fallen and ruined by sin, human nature permanently inclined to evil, so this cure is typical of the powers given by God to the Church, residing in the sacraments instituted by Him for the healing of the spiritual infirmities of mankind. From this point of view each of the singular and striking actions pertaining to this cure can be severally and distinctly explained. Jesus takes the man who is to be healed apart from the multitude, for He alone has power to cure him; the world has none. So the soul in need of spiritual healing is immediately separated from the crowd of sinners by the first of the sacraments, baptism; he is removed out of the world and taken into the Church, taken to Jesus, who alone can heal him. Furthermore, our Lord puts His finger into the ear of the deaf man. The finger of God formed the ear, and the finger of God restores it—when marred by sin—to its pristine excellence. This process constitutes part of the ceremonial of baptism, the sacrament whereby the spiritual hearing—the medium for the reception of divine truth—destroyed by original sin, is renewed in the soul. Finally with spittle Jesus moistens the man's tongue, that member formed out of the moist earth, the ground out of which God originally created the body of man and which now is made instrumental in healing this particular portion of the body. In like manner the Church, employing this ceremony in baptism, loosens man's spiritual tongue, tied by sin, and renders it capable of proclaiming the divine praises, publishing divine truth. Again, my soul, you will do well to meditate attentively upon the deep mystic significance of the mira-

cle you are contemplating to-day, and reflect with feelings of thankfulness on the graces conferred in holy baptism on your senses, especially those of hearing and speech. Look to it that your conscience may not have cause to reproach you bitterly, when our Lord once more by His minister and representative mysteriously touches the members of those senses, and anoints them with the holy oils in the Sacrament of Extreme Unction.

**3d.** Consider the words wherewith the Evangelist concludes his narrative: "And he spoke right." (v. 35.) Happy, doubly happy is the man, for he makes a right use of the senses that are restored to him. He can speak now, and he "speaks right." Take example by this, my soul. Perhaps you say in your heart: why, nothing is more just and right than that the man who is cured should make a good and proper use of the senses bestowed on him by a miracle, that he should employ them in the service and to the glory of God. If you consider it a matter of course that the deaf-mute should do this, why is it not equally a matter of course in your case, since you are in possession of the same grace, and have enjoyed it from your childhood? Therefore as the principal fruit to be derived from to-day's meditation resolve to make a good use of your five senses and above all to "speak right"; for therein consists the perfection of the Religious, of the true Christian. Remember the words of Holy Scripture: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." (Prov. xviii. 21.) St. Francis laid the greatest stress on the observance by his Brethren of religious silence, for in this he considered the abstinence from idle words, of which we shall have to give account, to consist. He always blamed severely the habit of indulging in useless conversation, when he remarked it in his monks. Endeavor therefore during the week on which you are entering to-day to govern your tongue so well, that at its close it may be said of you "he spoke right," and with this aim keep ever before your mind this saying of Giles, the pious disciple of our Seraphic Father: "He whose conversation is good and profitable to the souls of his hearers is truly the

mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit, whereas he whose conversation is bad and unprofitable speaks with the tongue of the devil."

## MONDAY AFTER THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE JEWS WHO SOUGHT A SIGN FROM CHRIST.

Fix your attention upon the scene which ensued immediately after the cure of the demoniac; it presents to view many a striking contrast. While on the one hand some, whose hearts are full of malice and envy, cry: "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub" (St. Luke xi. 15), and others, like the woman who spoke out boldly in His praise, are struck with wonder and admiration for our Lord, some, again, draw near and demand from Him a special sign, whereby they might know whether He was in very truth the Messiah. Join the crowd in spirit; listen to and consider the answer Jesus gives:

1st. "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh a sign." (St. Matt. xii. 39.) As if they had not already had signs enough! Did they not see the lame walk, the blind restored to sight and sick persons giving God thanks for the recovery of their health? No; they do not really require a sign, they only want an excuse for their incredulity. They will not believe in spite of all the signs they have already had, and they would not believe if another; a fresh sign, were given to them. Consequently our Lord calls them an evil generation, doubly evil, because they seek to conceal their malice. Consider, my soul, whether you do not sometimes act as one of that "evil generation." You have long known what is the will of God; your Confessor, your Superior, your own conscience has made you acquainted with it. But the will of God is not in accordance with your own desires, your own inclinations, and therefore you want a fresh sign to induce you to fol-

low it. O "evil generation!" Do not allow yourself to be deluded in this way any longer; from henceforth obey promptly without waiting for any further indication as to what you ought to do, and obey most promptly when the command you have received does not correspond with your own wishes.

**2d.** Consider the words our Lord added: "A sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet." (v. 39.) As Jonas was sent to preach repentance to the wicked Ninivites, so Jesus was to the sinful Jews. And as Jonas was three days in the whale's belly, and his deliverance from that prison on the third day was for the Ninivites an incontrovertible proof of his divine mission, so our Lord's resurrection from the grave was the principal sign, the chief evidence for the Jews that He came from God. The Scribes and Pharisees sought a sign from on high; our Lord promises them a sign from the deep, His resurrection from the dead. That is the most irrefragable proof of His power and majesty which He gave on earth before all mankind; and He mentions this sign, than which there could be no greater, as one which might suffice to overcome the incredulity of the Jews. If they rejected that there was no more hope for them, for it was the last sign. How many signs has God already given you, my soul? For how long has grace been knocking at the door of your heart, warning and admonishing you? Perchance to-day's meditation will be the last sign for you. Our Lord could work no greater wonder to bring conviction to the mind of the Jews than the sign of Jonas, His resurrection, and yet they believed not. In like manner Almighty God could grant you no greater grace, He could give you no more favorable opportunity for your salvation and sanctification, than your vocation to the Priesthood, to the Religious life. Yet perhaps even this is of little avail in your case.

**3d.** Consider what our Lord says: "The men of Ninive shall rise in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it; because they did penance at the preaching of Jonas. And behold a greater than Jonas here." (v.

41.) Jonas, as St. Chrysostom remarks, was a servant, the Master Himself is here; Jonas proclaimed the chastisement to come, Jesus offers grace to the sinful. If under these circumstances the Jews are more impenitent than the Ninivites, woe betide them in the judgment! Reflect attentively, my soul, on these serious and weighty words uttered by our Lord. You are a Priest, consequently you are surrounded on all sides with graces as by an ocean. You are in a Religious Order, therefore you are in a sure haven, in the smooth roadstead of grace. Woe betide you if you are tepid and careless! Seculars who have lived in the world, nay Jews and heathen shall rise in the judgment with you and shall condemn you; for many amongst them have been more zealous in the service of God, more abstemious and temperate, less proud, less attached to ease and comfort than you are; and that amid all the many dangers of the world. And behold! you had more graces, more safeguards, more assistance in the pursuit of what is good, and how sorry is the result! Lay this well to heart. Seek no further sign. The state you have chosen in itself requires of you more zeal, greater virtue than from others in the world. This the good friar, the pious disciple of St. Francis, Brother Giles, recognized, and expressed in the following words, on which you will do well to meditate: "I had far rather," he says, "live in the world, constantly hoping and longing to become a Religious, than lead the life and wear the habit of a monk, and be lukewarm and careless, not striving to advance in virtue and in the practice of good works."



**TUESDAY AFTER THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY  
AFTER PENTECOST.**

**ON THE PARABLE COMPARING THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN  
TO A TREASURE AND A PEARL.**

To-day represent to yourself our Lord in His character of a divine Teacher. Behold Him standing amongst the people, who hang upon His lips, marvelling at His words, while He declares to them the truths of the kingdom of Heaven under the form of appropriate parables. They have already heard the parable of the cockle and the wheat, of the sower and the different seeds, of the grain of mustard-seed and the leaven; now He sets before them the similitude of the hidden treasure and the costly pearl. Listen to His divine utterances and ponder them well:

**1st.** "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found." (St. Matt. xiii. 44.) According to the explanation given by the Fathers this field is our holy Faith. In this field an inexhaustible treasure is hidden, the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, the abundant merits of the ever-blessed Mother of God, the merits of the saints. And this precious treasure is found by man as it were accidentally; that is to say, the inestimable treasure of Faith becomes ours without any special merit on our part whereby we deserve it, but wholly and solely through the grace of God. To God and to God alone do we owe this gift of faith, as the Apostle says: "By grace you are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God; not of works that no man may glory." (Eph. ii. 8, 9.) Consider this truth attentively, my soul. See how many millions of mankind, Jews and heathen, Turks and worshippers of the sun, yearn to be enlightened by the true light; they desire to see what you see, but the grace to do this is lacking to them. How have you deserved to find this precious treas-

ure? Thank God for this grace; to-day and many times besides pray for the unhappy heathen; and occasionally offer the holy sacrifice or some act of mortification on their behalf, that it may be granted to them also to find the treasure hidden in the field.

**2d.** Consider how the treasure hidden in the field may be understood as symbolical of the Religious state. Brother Giles gives this interpretation to the parable. When on one occasion a man asked him whether he would advise him to enter the Order of Friars Minor or lead a devout life in the world, the faithful follower of our Sraphic Father said to him: "My Brother, supposing that a poor man knew of a great treasure that was hidden in a place that belonged to no man in particular, he would assuredly ask counsel of no one in order to assure himself as to whether it would be well for him to dig up that treasure and convey it to his own house. How much the more ought one to make every exertion and lose no time in applying himself to dig up with all his strength and the utmost diligence the celestial treasure which is deposited in Religious Orders and Communities." Yes, the monastic state is indeed a treasure, but it is a hidden treasure. The world, and all Religious whose hearts cleave to the world, who only look on the surface of things, cannot discern the value of that hidden treasure; they know it not; they are ignorant of its very existence. But those who dig deep, and discover it, taste the sweetness and the peace, the repose, the blessedness of the Religious life in its integrity, and say with Thomas à Kempis: "Thou hast shown mercy, O God, beyond all hope to Thy servant, and beyond all my desert bestowed Thy grace and friendship upon me. What return shall I make to Thee for this grace? For it is not granted to all to take on them the monastic life." (Imit. B. iii. ch. 10.) When St. Bernard was quitting his father's castle with his brothers in order to embrace the Religious state, Guy, the eldest, seeing their youngest brother at play in the courtyard, said to him: "You see this castle and all these lands, my little brother Nivard? Well, all of them will belong exclusively to you." The boy

replied: "What! you are going to take Heaven and leave the earth to me? That seems a very unfair division." Such was the view a mere child took of your state, and if you, who are a man, one perhaps already advanced in years, have not learnt to appreciate the grace of your vocation, it is greatly to be feared that you have not as yet begun to dig up the treasure hidden in the field. What is the reason of this? The following passage tells you:

**3d.** "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking good pearls; who when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way, and sold all that he had, and bought it." (Matt. xiii. 45, 46.) Mark this well: The discovery of the pearl of great price was a chance; but the discovery was preceded by diligent search, and in order to gain possession of the treasure he had found, the merchant had to part with much, nay, all that he had. Through the mercy of God after a longer or shorter period of search, or possibly without searching at all, you have found the pearl of great price, the gift of faith, or a vocation to the Religious life. What have you sold in order to make your own this pearl that you have found? what have you given up to become a faithful Christian, a true monk? Have you really parted with all that you possessed? Have you, as St. Gregory asks, renounced all earthly things, all questionable pleasures? Alas! tepid, indolent, indifferent, you have never set yourself to dig up the treasure. For your own interest, for the sake of averting the divine judgments, resolve from this day forward to conquer your sloth. "In my opinion," writes Brother Giles, "the Order of Friars Minor is indeed instituted by God for the spiritual welfare and for the great edification of the people; but woe to us, brethren, if we are not the Religious that we ought to be." Alas indeed for us if the words of the author of the Imitation can be applied to us: "Oh, the lukewarmness and negligence of our state, that we so quickly fall away from our former fervor, and are now through sloth and listlessness even weary of living!" Lay this lamentation to heart, and endeavor in future to follow the salutary counsel: "We ought every day to

renew our resolution, and rouse ourselves to fervor as if it were the first day of our conversion, saying: Help me, O Lord God, in my good resolution and in Thy holy service, and give me grace this very day really and truly to begin; for what I have done hitherto is nothing." (Imit. B. i. ch. 19.)

## WEDNESDAY AFTER THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON TRUE AND FALSE KNOWLEDGE.

Imagine yourself a spectator of the pleasing scene when the disciples whom our Lord sent out two and two to preach the Gospel returned to their Master with joy, and told Him what they had done, and how even the evil spirits were subject to them. Our Lord received their report in the kindest manner; then He spoke these words:

1st. "I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to little ones." (St. Luke x. 21.) By the "wise and prudent" our Lord here means those who are versed in worldly wisdom, in carnal wisdom, the philosophers of the world, arrogant, self-sufficient, boastful. For them, as long as they rest in human wisdom, heavenly wisdom is and will remain hidden. For this heavenly wisdom, this infused light is none other than divine grace, and as Holy Scripture tells us, "God gives grace to the humble, and resisteth the proud, those who are wise in their own conceits." (St. James iv. 6.) This truth is confirmed a hundred times over by the testimony of history. Who were they who accepted the heavenly wisdom in the spirit of faith? Unlearned fishermen, uncultured publicans, ignorant women; in short those only whom the world would look upon as fools. Who on the other hand opposed and rejected this heavenly wisdom? The sages of the earth, the Scribes, the Pharisees,

the pagan philosophers. Unhappy those who are thus deluded! Whilst the little ones, enlightened by light from on high, learnt true wisdom, the great ones of the earth sit in darkness, and thus the words of the Apostle are fulfilled. "Let no man deceive himself; if any man amongst you seem to be wise, let him become a fool that he may be wise. For the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God. For it is written: I will catch the wise in their own craftiness. And again: The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain." (I. Cor. iii. 18-20.) Consider this truth; it will give you the key to many things that are puzzling in the past, and to much that appears singular and inexplicable in the present, and will enable you to understand why it is precisely the little ones, the unlearned, the weak, who are such great factors in the Church for the extension of revealed truth, as those who carry the light of faith to distant lands, the Founders of Orders, men who in the sight of the world are "fools."

**2d.** Consider how the little ones, the humble, are to be esteemed blessed above the great ones and the wise on this account also, because they are more open to receive not only the gift of Faith, but also that of divine grace. St. Augustine acknowledged this, when he was yet learned in earthly wisdom alone, and sorrowfully exclaimed: "The unlearned rise up and lay hold on the kingdom of God, whereas we with all our erudition shall be cast into the abyss." "For," as the Apostle says, "knowledge puffeth up," and as St. Thomas tells us, "learned men are generally less pious than the ignorant and simple." Are we for this reason to despise science and learning? By no means; it is a gift of God to man, and rightly applied is of service, great service to him. But the dangers attending it ought to teach you, if you are unlettered, not to envy the learned, not to murmur because you are less gifted than they are, but to follow the counsel of our Seraphic Father: "Those who are unlearned ought not from motives of ambition to strive to become erudite. A man's knowledge and eloquence are to be measured only by the extent to which he

practises what he knows and what he says. We see many straining every nerve to attain proficiency in knowledge and science, but he is to be deemed happy who is contented only to know Jesus crucified." Let those who are devoid of human learning mark this for their consolation.

**3d.** Consider how our Lord's assertion ought not to alarm those who are truly wise and prudent. For they also can be "little ones," if only they unite humility to their learning, if they do not neglect prayer for study, for as Albertus Magnus says, more progress is made by means of prayer and piety than by hard study. St. Thomas of Aquin used to say that he owed all his vast learning to prayer, and St. Bonaventure, the Seraphic Doctor, asserted that by casting himself at the foot of the crucifix, and imploring from our Lord a solution of his difficulties, and by assisting at holy Mass, he made greater progress in learning and obtained far more light than by poring over all manner of books. Would that this truth were better known, more closely followed; would that the dew of prayer fell more abundantly upon the labors of the wise and learned, for then their science would not be so sterile of results. In the opinion of Brother Giles the fear of God and the love of God are the perfection of knowledge, and Thomas à Kempis thus writes: "It is not deep talk that makes a man holy and pious; but a virtuous life makes him dear to God. I had rather feel compunction than know its definition. If thou didst know the whole Bible by heart and the sayings of all the philosophers, what would it all profit thee without the love of God and without grace?" (Imit. B. i. ch. 1.) Wherefore rise up, my soul, *labora*, work, but also *ora*, pray. Do not let piety suffer through your love of books; do not let science and learning oust devotion and humility from your heart; keep them, and you can read fearlessly the words of Jesus: "I confess to Thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones."

## THURSDAY AFTER THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE CONSOLATION IMPARTED IN OUR LORD'S TEACHING.

Behold the Saviour of mankind, in whose person "the goodness and kindness of God" appeared upon earth, standing among His disciples, the embodiment of heavenly gentleness and charity, surrounded by the poor and the afflicted, to whom He speaks words of solace and encouragement. Imagine yourself one of those disciples who press round the divine Teacher, anxious to learn of Him the way of salvation, and listen to the consoling promises which fall from His lips.

1st. "Come to Me," He says, "all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." (St. Matt. xi. 28.) Words of love and mercy, how consoling is the invitation they contain! Our Lord knows that we labor and are burdened. We are burdened, because we groan beneath the weight of sin, and sin, as St. Jerome says, is truly a heavy load. We labor and are burdened, for as St. Gregory declares, it is a hard yoke and an oppressive burden to be subject to the things of time and sense, to strive after earthly things, to cling to what is perishable and desire what is transitory, and yet wish not to pass away with it. Hence all mankind groans bitterly under the twofold weight of sin and earthly care, and each one of us is ready to lament in the words of the great ascetic: "The days of this life are short and evil, full of sorrow and miseries. I am left a poor and banished man in the land of the enemy, where are wars every day and very great mischances." (Imit. B. iii. ch. 48.) Endeavor while meditating on this subject, my soul, to fathom the profound misery, to estimate aright the cares and sorrows of man's life upon earth, and you will then comprehend the plenitude of grace and consolation contained in our Lord's words when

He says: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." Amongst your friends and acquaintances, in the world and the pleasures of the world you have vainly sought for rest and refreshment; they are to be found in Jesus alone. But you will perhaps say: "I have come to Jesus, for His sake I have left all, and alas! my life abounds in toil and trouble." The answer is contained in the context.

2d. Consider the words our Lord adds: "Take up My yoke upon you and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart; and you shall find rest to your souls." (v. 29.) Lay this sentence to heart. Again our Lord promises refreshment to your soul, but He makes a condition. "Take up My yoke upon you." He does not promise rest without labor, He does not promise perfect repose; that will be for another life. "The hour for this has not yet come; rather is there yet another season of war, and toil, and trial." But in the yoke our Lord bids you take up you will find refreshment for your soul, provided only that you are, like Him, "meek and humble of heart." Consider this truth. Under the yoke of sin you will constantly groan, whereas under the yoke of Jesus, the yoke His commandments and your Rule lay upon you, you may enjoy tranquillity, content, nay happiness, if only you cultivate humility and meekness. Ask yourself when it is that you find the yoke of the Lord irksome, when you begin to groan under its weight, and you will find that it is invariably when you fail in humility and meekness, that is when your patient submission gives way. "You are dejected," writes Father Rodriguez, "because you think you are not sufficiently considered. You are sad and gloomy because some project has failed, whereby you thought to gain distinction. Pride makes the yoke galling to you, for perpetual peace is only for the humble." This you will experience if you are wanting in meekness and patience. "My good fellow," Brother Giles once said to a monk who was complaining about some order his Superior had given him, "the more you murmur the heavier you will make your burden, the more oppressive will be the load you have to



bear; but the more humbly and submissively you bend your head under the yoke of holy obedience the easier you will find it to obey this behest." Up then, my soul, begin this very day; learn of Jesus to be meek and humble of heart, and you will find refreshment for your soul. But there is something more to be considered.

**3d.** Our Lord says: "My yoke is sweet and My burden light." (v. 30.) Have you not yet experienced the truth of His words? The yoke of divine charity in Christ is light, for as St. Bernard teaches, it does not weigh the Christian down; on the contrary it carries him who carries it willingly. What, exclaims one of the saints, what can be sweeter than a yoke which compels us to love all men, to hate no man, to be free from the bondage of the world and to enjoy God, the supreme and eternal Good? This yoke only galls the stiff neck; when you have once overcome your corrupt nature, that which was difficult becomes easy, that is sweet which appeared so bitter. Those who live in the world, who are of the world, as St. Bernard most justly remarks, have a horror of the Religious life, because they see in it nothing but the cross. You, however, my brethren, know by your own experience that the cross we carry contains an unction that renders it not only a light burden, but causes us, if I may so speak, to find most sweetness in that which is most bitter to us. Divine grace, says St. Augustine, makes all things easy. And St. Bernard exclaims: "Where love is there is no labor, but sweetest enjoyment!"

Wherefore, my soul, pray and sigh that you may obtain this charity, this grace; exert yourself to the utmost; bear your daily yoke with patience, and you will find that the more perfectly you fulfil your duties as a Priest, the more mortified you are ~~if~~ a Religious, the more you will experience the truth of our Lord's words: "My yoke is sweet and My burden light."

## FRIDAY AFTER THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON OUR LORD'S PASSION AS A DETERRENT FROM SIN.

Place before your mind your Saviour at some period of His Passion. Imagine, for instance, that you see Him standing in the court of Pilate's house, His flesh cruelly torn and mangled by the scourges, wearing the crown of thorns on His pallid, blood-stained brow, turning upon you His merciful eyes, as He sorrowfully exclaims: "See what sin has done!" Is it possible that you do not hate and abhor the sin that has reduced your Saviour to such a condition, that you are not deterred from sin by the affecting spectacle that the Son of God presents?

1st. Consider this: Supposing that a mother whose husband had been murdered in a most barbarous manner were to tell her children the sad story of their father's death, with tears and lamentations describing to them the fury of his murderers, the barbarities they practised, and finally showing them the blood-stained garments their unfortunate father wore on that fatal day; would not those be unnatural, depraved children if, instead of exhibiting the utmost hatred and execration of such a crime, they regarded it with complete indifference? Nay more, what would one say of them if they actually made friends with the assassins who put their father to death? Impossible, that is impossible, I hear you exclaim; but alas! you yourself are one of these unnatural children. How often does the Church, your mother, relate to you the woful, the awful story of the murder of your Father and Redeemer? how often does she recall to your mind, especially on every Friday, His death of agony? how often does she display before your sight in pictures and images, in the stations of the cross, His blood-stained raiment? And yet you remain cold and untouched, you do not conceive the slightest abhorrence of those who put your Lord

to death—your sins, the sins of mankind. On the contrary you treat them in the most friendly manner. Can this really be so? Put this question to your own heart.

**2d.** Again, imagine that you see a traveller on the point of entering an extensive forest. At that moment a man at work close by calls to him and warns him not to take that road, for in the forest there is a very dangerous and venomous viper, against which no one is safe, and which has already caused the death of several strong, healthy men by its poisonous fangs. Would not the traveller in question deserve to be called a fool if he persisted in going alone, by an unfamiliar path, through that perilous wood? Surely the warning given him by that friendly voice would be enough to make him desist from his purpose. Yet, my soul, you act otherwise very frequently. You constantly see before you the sacred Victim slain by the bite of that serpent; you see Christ upon the cross, bleeding, dying on account of sin, that hellish serpent. It is sin which has caused the death of the mightiest in Israel; hear the warning cry of the prophet Isaias: "He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins." (ch. liii. 5.) Can you listen to these affecting words and yet cast yourself into the arms of sin, of that which has brought the innocent Saviour to such a pass? Oh how blind you are! If the sinless Redeemer is subjected to so terrible a chastisement, if in the green wood they do these things, what will be done unto you, the dry, if you still do not let yourself be deterred from sin?

**3d.** Consider how often beacons are put up near the coast, to warn mariners off sunken rocks, upon which they might be likely to run. Now if a captain were so presumptuous as to pay no heed to the signal of danger, and consequently his vessel were to go to pieces on the rocks, would you not be the first to say: "He has only himself to blame, because he would not be warned"? "Out of thy own mouth I judge thee." (St. Luke xix. 22.) Is it not true that on every highway and byway of life, on mountain heights and woodland depths, in the secluded valley and on the open fields, a beacon is set up warning

you to beware of the dangers that threaten your bark, the beacon of the cross of Christ? Every crucifix on which your eye falls speaks to you; it calls on you to avoid the path, on account of which the Redeemer had to tread the way of the cross, and if you do not heed the warning cry, woe betide you, it is your own fault if your end is perdition. Reflect upon this attentively, my soul. Daily, hourly, at every step you take, the sign of our redemption meets your sight, you behold the beacon-light cautioning you against sin, and yet how often you fall into sin!

Meditate upon this deplorable fact to-day with a contrite heart; make resolutions of amendment, and whenever you pass by a crucifix, pray that you and all sinners may understand better and profit more fully by this beacon-light given you for your warning.

## SATURDAY AFTER THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE REASONS WHY HEROD PUT JOHN THE BAPTIST TO DEATH.

Whilst our Lord went about among the towns and villages of Palestine teaching the people and working miracles, His great precursor was confined in prison by order of Herod the tetrarch. Cast a glance at the holy Baptist; imagine that you see him languishing in a gloomy dungeon at the very time when in the palace above Herod is seated at the festive board with his guests, nothing being farther from his thoughts than the intention of putting the saintly preacher of penance to death. How was it that he was induced so suddenly to issue the command that he should be beheaded?

**1st.** Consider that Herod was sitting at a sumptuous banquet, gratifying his sensual appetite with the feasting and revelry which usually prevailed at the table of

heathen magnates on the occasion of festivities of this kind. Excess in eating and drinking had weakened the judgment of the otherwise shrewd tyrant. Fully conscious as he was of the high esteem in which John was held, prudential motives had hitherto led him to spare his life; but now over-indulgence in wine makes the ruler oblivious of state policy, and this is the first reason why, against his better judgment, he puts the Baptist to death. Consider, my soul, the dangers attending intemperance in eating and drinking. There is nothing more ruinous to the Priest and Religious. Many and many a time has all that was gained by the strenuous efforts, the struggles of years, been lost in consequence of taking part in some luxurious repast! "In wine is excess," the Apostle says. (Eph. v. 18.) "The bride of Christ," says St. Jerome, "should shun wine as if it were poison, for it is the first weapon the devil makes use of against the young. Wine and youth together stir the passions in a twofold manner. Why pour oil into the fire? Why add more fuel to the flames of youthful concupiscence?" Reflect, my soul, on these words of the saint.

**2d.** Consider the next means the devil employs to incite Herod to issue the fatal order. It is the spectacle of a beautiful and dissolute dancer. Salome, the daughter of Herodias, enters the banqueting-hall to entertain the guests by her dancing. The sight of the fair dancer's charms has the effect of exciting Herod, who is already heated with wine, almost to frenzy; all his caution goes to the winds and he promises his step-daughter even the half of his kingdom. O Herod, to what lengths thou dost go in consequence of one voluptuous glance! For the sake of looking on at a dance, he actually will give up half of the kingdom which he has built up at the cost of so much blood. Hence, my soul, you can see very clearly what follies a man is capable of who has looked with desire upon a woman; what mischief may be caused by indulgence in carnal, sensual pleasures. What wine began, the dance finished. Wherefore be on your guard, O Christian, be doubly on your guard if you are a Priest or Re-

ligious, against wandering glances; beware of taking part, however remotely, in sensual pleasures, in close intercourse with persons of the opposite sex. This would make you a murderer like Herod, a murderer of your own soul. Not in vain did the Seraphic Father St. Francis address to his Brethren words which we should do well to make the subject of serious meditation: "We must carefully avoid all intercourse and intimacy with women (and they with men), and this all the more since we see that it is often the means whereby the strong become weak, and the weak are ruined. Unless a man is of tried virtue, I am persuaded that it is no less difficult for him to hold such intercourse without being the worse for it than it would be to walk on red-hot embers without burning his feet. It is dangerous to bear about in one's heart any image calculated to kindle the fire of our rebel nature, and stain the purity of a chaste soul." Lay to heart this warning the saint utters, and take as your rule the maxim he lays down. He says that all converse with women (and this applies equally to that of women with men) is vain and useless, except for the sake of confession or to impart sound spiritual counsel; or again if good manners require such intercourse, and in that case let it be as brief as possible.

**3d.** Consider the third and last reason why Herod contracted the stain of bloodguiltiness. It was his passion for Herodias and hers for him, although she was his brother's wife. John alone had the courage to rebuke severely this illicit union. In consequence of this, the woman, whose passions were so ill-regulated, hated the man who presumed to reprove her, and desired his death. "Give me here in a dish the head of John the Baptist." (St. Matt. xiv. 8.) Such was the request which the damsel, instructed by her mother, presented to the king; and Herod, although, as the Evangelist tells us, he was "struck sad," and shrank with horror from the idea of putting the Baptist to death, was yet too weak to deny the request, to resist the impulse of passion. Now examine your own heart, my soul, and ascertain whether some pas-

sion, by whatever name you call it, does not hold sway there. And if you should discover any such proclivities within you, begin at once to overcome them, fight against them, for unless you do so, they will, as St. Dorotheus says, strike deeper root, and gradually increase in strength. But if you begin to withstand them at the very outset, they will decrease day by day and gradually lose all their power. And St. Francis says that on the other hand if the devil can but obtain an inch of ground in the heart of man, he will soon take an ell.

## THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

Imagine that you see before you the unhappy man, who having fallen among robbers, lies groaning and bleeding in the wood, fixing his dim eyes sorrowfully upon the priest and the Levite, who ruthlessly pass him by. His strength is gradually ebbing away, when O joy! the good Samaritan comes near him, and seeing him, rescues him from his wretched condition. Keep this picture before your eyes while you meditate on this subject.

**1st.** Consider the higher mystic signification of the parable. According to the gloss of the two great Fathers of the Church, St. Augustine and St. Ambrose, it refers to Christ and His great compassion for man. Adam went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, he descended from the height of paradise to the depth of sin by the fall, and all mankind, pilgrims upon earth, fell with him. They fell among thieves, the spirits of evil who robbed them, stripping them of the garment of sanctifying grace, and wounded them with the deep wounds of sin. Priest and Levite, the representatives of the Old Covenant with its rigid code, passed by the traveller who lay mortally wounded without rendering him any assistance. Then Jesus came, Jesus the merciful came in His humility and

poverty, the Samaritan, hated and despised by the Jews; He does not pass by the forsaken sufferer; He goes up to him, and bending kindly over him, pours into his gaping wounds the invigorating wine of His sacred doctrines, He drops into them the holy oil of the graces His sacraments impart, and in His character of the Good Shepherd He carries the lamb upon His shoulders to the inn, holy Church. To her He gives "two pence," the two testaments, embracing all that is ordained and instituted for our salvation, in order that she may "take care" of poor wounded humanity, until the Lord shall return on the great day when payment shall be made. Meditate carefully upon this time-honored interpretation of to-day's parable, fraught as it is with deep meaning, and let your heart overflow with love and gratitude to the good Samaritan, to whom you also are indebted for your rescue.

2d. Consider the reason why our Lord made choice of a Samaritan as the model of fraternal charity He proposed to the lawyer. St. Augustine tells us the reason. Whilst in the schools of the Jews the teachers of the law debated whether, as only an Israelite could be neighbor to Israelites, the precept of charity included any duty to heathens and Samaritans, our Lord, by the parable of the good Samaritan, taught that charity and mercy must be shown to all, without distinction of race or nation. Christian charity, symbolized in the Samaritan, recognizes him as her neighbor, to whom—to quote St. Augustine's beautiful words—she is bound to render service, to show compassion if he needs it and because he needs it; and as she would render such aid to every one who requires it, it follows that no one is excluded from, or without claim upon, that charity. Thus we can say of no man, nor he of us, that we are not his neighbor, nor have we any right to withhold our compassion from him. Wherefore if every one in the whole wide world is to be reckoned as our neighbor, and every one has a claim upon our charity, so that we are allowed to make no exceptions, alas for you! my soul, who are apt to make such exceptions even in the narrow circle of your immediate surroundings; you, too, who



are a Priest, a Levite, one highly favored by God. It is not without intention that our Lord proposes to us a Samaritan when He would teach us to show mercy. The Samaritan, the one who leads a secular life, has far more charity than the Priest and the Levite. Thus, as St. Gregory says, the good works of laymen who live in the world often put the clergy to shame. Lay to heart this day the words of St. Jerome: "It is charity that makes men true Religious, true monks: without charity the convent would be a hell upon earth and its inmates would be devils; while with charity it will become an earthly paradise and its denizens will be angels."

**3d.** Consider what a high value the charity towards our neighbor enjoined on us in to-day's Gospel possesses in God's sight. The Most High Himself places the precept of charity towards our neighbor on a par with the precept of charity towards God. "The second is like unto it," He says. (St. Mark xii. 31.) Thus charity towards our neighbor is inseparable from charity towards God. "If any man say: I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar" (I. St. John iv. 20); this we read in St. John's epistle, and St. Chrysostom likewise says: "No man who loves God can hate his neighbor, nor can any man love God who hates his fellow man. If the love of our brother wanes, we may be sure that the love of God has already waned also in our heart." This commandment is given so high a place that unless we fulfil it it is impossible for us to love God. Hence our Lord in His last discourse declares it to be the indispensable, the essential mark of His disciples that they love one another; and St. Francis impresses nothing more emphatically upon Christians than the practice of that brotherly love which our Lord requires of His followers. Pause awhile, my soul, and consider this: How great, how infinitely great God is, and how small, how unspeakably small man is! And yet this God declares that no one truly loves Him who withholds his love from his fellow man. Thus we see how highly God values charity towards our neighbor. If therefore, my soul, you complain of having so little devotion, of being so seldom recol-

lected, of knowing nothing of the spirit of penance, and you puzzle your brains as to the reason why you are so deficient in the fruits of divine grace, trouble yourself no longer on this point, but ask yourself what amount of love you have for your neighbor.

## MONDAY AFTER THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE NET AS AN EMBLEM OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

Listen to the divine Teacher when, speaking to His apostles, He says: "The kingdom of heaven is like to a net cast into the sea and gathering together of all kind of fishes." (St. Matt. xiii. 47.) This simile was certainly most familiar to and within the comprehension of men whose former trade was that of fishermen, and it is also pregnant with meaning for them as future fishers of men.

1st. St. Gregory teaches us that under the net as an emblem of the kingdom of Heaven we are primarily to understand the Church. Now if the Church is to be compared to a net cast into the sea, observe in the first place that although the net is thrown out in order to enclose all the fish, not nearly all are taken in its meshes. In like manner the Church is intended to embrace all mankind in her bosom, where alone salvation is to be found, and by reason of this she is spread throughout the whole world. And yet how many are outside the Church! The majority, the overwhelming majority of mankind remain without the net within which alone spiritual safety is secured. Out of the thousand millions of human beings who inhabit the globe, not more than something over two hundred millions know and revere the name of Christ, and amongst this number a large proportion, though they do in a certain way believe in Christ, have not the true faith. Ponder well this truth; in imagination pass in review the innumerable multitude of Jews, Turks, and heathens who

are not within the net, and then ask yourself, how have you deserved the great, the inestimable blessing of being amongst the small number of fishes enclosed in the net? Are you grateful as you ought to be for this grace? St. Arsenius, we are told, invariably kept the anniversary of the day when God in His mercy took him out of the stormy waves of the world into the safe net of sanctifying grace, and perhaps it has never occurred to you to offer grateful thanks for the privilege expressed in these words: "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and have appointed you that you should go and should bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain." (St. John xv. 16.) From this day forth, my soul, see that you manifest this gratitude, and do so specially by daily reciting a prayer, or performing some good work on behalf of those fishes who are not enclosed in the net.

**2d.** Consider that our Lord says of the net that it "gathers together of all kind of fishes." Herein is another truth worthy of our consideration, that in the visible Church the good and the bad, living members and dead members, are found side by side. Since this is so, reflect seriously on what St. Irenaeus commends to our attention, that those who are taken up into the net of the Church by holy baptism (called by the early Christians fishes out of the waters of regeneration) do not thereby obtain any certainty of their predestination, no assurance that they will be of the number of those who are "chosen out into vessels," with the promise of eternal life, for this depends entirely upon whether they maintain their life of grace in the Church of God, and finally are found to be "good" and not "bad" fishes. Lay this truth to heart, and if you are a Priest or Religious, do so more especially. There is no doubt that the Priest or Religious who is separated from the world, a dweller in the courts of our God, has more facilities for insuring his election to life eternal, but no certitude of this is granted him. The beloved disciple of our Seraphic Father, Brother Giles, on one occasion remarked very justly: "There is no great difficulty in embracing the Religious state, in entering the

service of the heavenly Monarch, but it is no easy matter to live up to the high standard of the monastic life, to maintain one's fervor, to persevere humbly in it unto one's last breath." Therefore, my soul, do not let the comfortable assurance that you are in the net induce you to relax your efforts and make sure of salvation; do not imagine that you have done all that need be done, but rather put this question to yourself each day as if you were but just beginning, this question which St. Bernard so frequently asked himself: "Bernard, Bernard, for what hast thou come hither?"

**3d.** Consider what is done with the fishes that are caught in the net. Our Lord says: "When the net was filled they drew out, and sitting by the shore they chose out the good into vessels, but the bad they cast forth." (v. 48.) Then He adds: "So shall it be at the end of the world. The angels shall go out and shall separate the wicked from among the just and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (v. 49, 50.) Appalling truth! As long as the net remains in the water all the fishes, good and bad alike, lie in it concealed from sight; but when the day of separation comes, then will those who on earth in the visible Church have been united together, the members of one family, one Community, who have offered the holy sacrifice at the same altar, who have spent their days in one and the same monastery, be torn apart and separated for ever. Happily placed in the celestial "vessels" the good will rejoice for ever, whilst the bad, cast into the furnace of fire, will rend the air with unceasing lamentations. Reflect attentively on this truth, and let it kindle your zeal for your own salvation, for the salvation of your Brethren and Sisters. Fight and struggle, pray and do penance, be bold to admonish and warn, in order that all who are fishes in one net, the net of Jesus Christ, may one day be chosen out and placed in the heavenly vessels, the regions of celestial felicity; and form a special resolution to-day as to the means you will adopt to accomplish this end.

**TUESDAY AFTER THE TWELFTH SUNDAY  
AFTER PENTECOST.**

**ON THE ACCUSATION BROUGHT BY THE PHARISEES AGAINST  
OUR LORD'S DISCIPLES.**

Hitherto in our meditations we have accompanied our Lord as He went to and fro preaching the Gospel in Palestine, up to the commencement of the third year of His public ministry. We have seen the Good Shepherd footsore and weary with His continual journeyings, hoarse with continual speaking, endeavoring by every means to induce the stray sheep of the house of Israel to come to Him. But alas! Although God Himself in His infinite charity and compassion descends from Heaven to earth, and goes to and fro upon the earth dispensing benefits and blessings at every step, His footsteps are dogged by men who follow Him, not actuated by grateful affection, but by malicious hatred; who follow Him not in the hope of gaining the blessings that strew His path but in order to turn those blessings into curses for themselves. The men of whom we speak are the Pharisees.

**1st.** Consider that these Pharisees, who outwardly appear so saintly, follow the Redeemer with the most unholy design; they follow Him not with the desire of learning of Him, but with the malicious design of watching His every action, of criticising it, of censuring it. And these men, be it observed, were the Scribes, who sat in Moses' seat; they came from Jerusalem, the holiest spot in all Israel; public opinion held them to be the most saintly, the most devout of Israel's sons, and yet these were the very men who were guilty of such hateful ingratitude towards the Saviour of mankind; who wilfully rejected the graces offered to them, offered to them first of all and most of all. If, while you meditate upon this, your heart swells within you with indignation at the unworthy

conduct of those degenerate Pharisees, restrain this feeling awhile and ask yourself whether our Lord does not meet with the like base ingratitude and shameful treatment now, at the hands of those who sit in Moses' seat, the Priests, that is, who minister in the sanctuary of God, the Religious who live in hallowed places, and who are considered by the people to be the most pious and holy of men. Ask yourself furthermore whether you have not a share in the guilt they incur, and perhaps at the conclusion of your reflection you will be led to form a serious resolution, and say: I will not be ungrateful towards God as are the heathen; I will not merely appear to be pious and godly because of the state I have embraced, but I will be so in reality.

**2d.** Consider how the Pharisees manifest their abominable spite by this, that they strive to sow dissension between Christ and His disciples. At one time they endeavor to lessen the respect of the disciples for their Master, saying: "Why doth your Master eat with publicans and sinners?" (St. Matt. ix. 11.) At another time they seek to stir up the Master against His disciples by addressing to Him the malicious question: "Why do Thy disciples transgress the tradition of the ancients, for they wash not their hands when they eat bread?" (St. Matt. xv. 2.) How detestable is this vice in which the Pharisees indulged! Seeking as they did to separate loving hearts and drop the poison of disunion in a community where peace and concord reigned! Now if whilst meditating upon this abominable conduct, your blood boils in just wrath against the Pharisees, pause and ask yourself whether you have not sometimes, perhaps inadvertently and unintentionally, by a few words that you have spoken thoughtlessly, or with more or less ill-will, prejudiced your fellow Religious against the Superior, or the Superior against his subjects? One cannot be careful enough in this respect; one cannot bridle one's tongue strictly enough; one cannot follow closely enough the sage counsel of St. Bonaventure, who says on this subject: As it is our duty to beware lest we speak evil of others, so we ought to be very careful

never to repeat to any one what this person or the other has said of him, remembering the warning of the Wise Man: "The words of a talebearer are as it were simple, but they reach to the innermost parts of the belly." (Prov. xxvi. 22.) For what we repeat in this way only serves to awaken bitter feelings and sow discord amongst brethren; it is severely denounced in Holy Scripture: "Six things there are that the Lord hateth, and the seventh His soul detesteth . . . him that soweth discord amongst brethren." (Prov. vi. 16, 19.)

**3d.** Consider that the Pharisees esteem the precepts of men above the commandments of God. Our Lord expressly says to them: "Why do you transgress the law of God for your tradition?" (St. Matt. xv. 3.) For whilst they reproached the disciples for "transgressing the tradition of the ancients," disregarding what was an institution of man, they themselves sanctioned an offering which was directly contrary to the expressed commandment of God and the violation of a sacred duty; which was not moreover prompted by a good and holy motive, but only permitted them, under the pretence of piety, to indulge hatred, revenge, unkindness to their parents, and their own avarice. For in order to exempt themselves from the onerous duty of maintaining, perhaps for a lengthened period and at considerable expense to themselves, their aged parents, they sought by offering a gift to the temple, money that ought to have been for the support of those parents, to obtain a release from the obligation, and thus gain the credit of performing a good work by violating the law of God and of nature. How great was the blindness of these hypocritical Pharisees! But are the Pharisees the only ones that are blind? Examine your own heart, and see whether somewhat of this pharisaical leaven does not yet adhere to it. How many there are among Christian people and Religious, who are more careful about performing certain self-imposed devotions or particular mortifications than about fulfilling the commandments of God, the laws of the Church, the Rule of their Order! They will shed tears if they are obliged to

omit some religious exercise of their own choosing, but they do not trouble themselves about an infraction of the Rule. They consider it a sin to break through the strict rule of life that they have made for themselves, but to carry it out in defiance of the law of charity is of no account. They perform their self-chosen occupations and favorite devotions with indefatigable diligence, but if the time-honored exercises of the Order or the precepts of the Church interfere with these, they do not scruple to set them aside. There may be seen the leaven of the Pharisees. Get rid of it. First of all fulfil the law of God, and whatever God, the Church, or your Rule requires of you; then you are at liberty to keep "the traditions of men"; that is, to perform your self-imposed religious exercises and good works, as you are told in the Imitation (B. i. ch. 19): "Take care that thou be not slack in common exercises and more forward in those of thine own choice; but having fully and faithfully performed what thou art bound to do, and what is enjoined thee, if thou hast any time remaining, give thyself to thyself according as thy devotion shall incline thee."

## WEDNESDAY AFTER THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE WOMAN OF CHANAAN.

For the purpose of giving Himself and His apostles a little rest, our Lord, after administering His reprimand to the Pharisees, withdrew to the more secluded hill-country to the north of Galilee, on the borders of Tyre and Sidon. "And behold a woman of Chanaan who came out of those coasts crying out, said to Him: Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil. Who answered her not a word." (St. Matt. xv. 22.) Here we find Jesus, in whom "the goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared" upon



earth, He of whom it is said that He "went about doing good," treating most sternly a poor suppliant, a woman who implores His aid in her affliction. Is He not the loving Saviour who compassionates all His children? Why then is He apparently so unkind to this unhappy petitioner?

**1st.** Jesus rejects the prayer of the woman out of obedience to the decree of His Father. "I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel." (v. 24.) Such are our Lord's words, and in them He gives the reason of His apparent harshness towards the woman who entreats His mercy. Consider this attentively, my soul. Primarily and indeed exclusively our Lord's mission was to the Jews; His public, personal ministry was entirely directed to them. God the Father made a solemn promise that the Messias should come of the seed of Abraham, and that in Israel, through Israel, all the nations of the earth should be blessed. (Gen. xxii. 18.) Now behold and admire the obedience, the self-denial, the inexhaustible patience Jesus displayed, expending as He did all the labor, the exertions of His life on earth on the thankless, stiff-necked people of Israel. How much more readily would the Gentiles have received His doctrine! He, the Lord of all those nations, beheld them, as He Himself declared when sitting at Jacob's well, as vast fields of wheat white already to harvest, prepared to receive the tidings of salvation, and He felt drawn to go to those countries the inhabitants of which were desirous to be saved, as we see from His going to the coasts of Sidon; but obedient to the divine behest He did not cross the border. Learn from this, my soul, to bend in patient renunciation of your own will to the yoke of obedience, and not to murmur if an ungrateful and unfertile sphere of activity is allotted you, though you yourself know where you could be far more useful, effect much more good. Remember we shall not be called to give an account of the amount that we have done, but whether in what we have done we have fulfilled the will of God. It is not the success of his work that renders the monk holy and blessed, but the exactness of

his obedience. God can spread His kingdom on earth without you and what you may achieve, but without Him, without accomplishing His will, you cannot ensure for yourself a place in that kingdom in spite of the success that may attend your labors.

**2d.** Consider how the want of response on our Lord's part stimulated the disciples to intercede on the woman's behalf. "His disciples came and besought Him, saying: Send her away, for she crieth after us." (v. 23.) Intercessory prayer is exceedingly pleasing to Almighty God. Our Lord throughout His whole life on earth prayed for mankind, and now in Heaven He continually intercedes for us. The apostle says: "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just" (I. St. John ii. 1); all the saints, following His example, spent much time in prayer of this nature, and every truly devout, large-hearted Christian, in whom Christ dwells, who has at heart the salvation of his fellow men, will pray more, be more willing to pray for others than for himself. It is a test whereby the measure of a man's perfection may be gauged, whether he is or is not given to intercessory prayer. The ordinary imperfect Christian almost invariably prays for temporal blessings, the more advanced in sanctity prays for what is eternal, while the perfect man obeys the precept of the Apostle, when he enjoins on us: "I desire therefore first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." (I. Tim. ii. 1, 3.) To what extent have you, my soul, acted in conformity with this exhortation? You desire to be saved; do you not know wherein the chief occupation of the redeemed in Heaven consists? First in praising God; then in interceding for man. Prove yourself qualified to join that blessed company.

**3d.** Our Lord rejected the woman's petition with a view to her spiritual welfare. Dionysius, the pious Carthusian, asserts that the prayer of the woman was not granted immediately, in order that she might urge it with more insistence, and that it might be granted in more

abundant measure. And St. Jerome says: "The faith of the suppliant was purified and increased by the grief which the apparent refusal of her entreaty caused her, and also by an interior enlightenment which resulted from her near approach to Christ. At first she calls Him the Son of David: 'Have mercy on me, Thou Son of David.' Then she calls Him 'Lord' and finally she adores Him." Learn from this not merely to be persevering in your prayers, not to grow weary if the Lord delays to answer them, but also to perceive the reasons why our Lord often appears to act hardly towards you, why He withholds all consolation from you for so long a period. His design in doing so is with you, as it was with the woman, to enlighten your faith and cleanse your soul more fully. You must not cease to pray and do good in seasons of desolation when our Lord appears to deal hardly with you, but like the woman, humble yourself the more, believe more confidently, cleanse your heart more completely from earthly dross. A disciple of St. Francis once began to complain bitterly in one such period of desolation; Brother Giles then said to him: "We cannot gather in the fruits of the earth without exertion and without previous labor. And even then the fruit we desire does not appear immediately after our toil has been spent to produce it, it does not come until the summer is here. In like manner God does not immediately bestow on man the blessings asked in prayer; He waits until the opportune moment comes, until the soul is cleansed from all earthly desires and purified from every vice. Wherefore, my Brother, go on working in the spirit of humility, for God, who is all-abounding in bounty and grace, knows all things and chooses what is for your greater good, and when the right time comes, He will in His mercy lavish on you the fulness of consolation." Lay these precious truths to heart, my soul. Persevere humbly in your supplication as the woman of Chanaan did, and to you also will the comforting words at length be addressed: "Great is thy faith; be it done to thee as thou wilt." (v. 28.)

## THURSDAY AFTER THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE SECOND MULTIPLICATION OF LOAVES.

Let us accompany our Lord as He proceeds on His way. Leaving the coasts of Sidon, He turns His steps northward to the Lebanon, and from thence in an easterly direction, coming nigh to the sea of Galilee, where He crosses the Jordan and enters the country beyond. On all the way the Saviour is accompanied by an attentive multitude, who flock from all sides to listen to the discourses of the heavenly Teacher, and obtain the graces dispensed by the divine Thaumaturgus. One such multitude of people had now continued three days with our Lord, receiving with avidity the Bread of Life wherewith He fed their souls, but without bodily food, so that the pangs of hunger made themselves keenly felt. The evening is closing in, they have nothing to eat, and the question arises how can they possibly get bread in that lonely region. Represent to yourself, my soul, the situation of these people, and the perplexity it occasions.

**1st.** The Evangelist tells us that Jesus called together His disciples (St. Matt. xv. 32), that He might acquaint them with the need of the people and His intention of relieving them. The multitudes who had listened so attentively, with such concern for their salvation, were not to be allowed to go away from Him fasting. On this occasion our Lord takes the initiative; in His charity He does not wait to be asked; He anticipates the appeal to His mercy. Here pause, my soul, and adore the gracious providence of God, who unasked supplies the corporal needs of those who in their solicitude for their spiritual welfare pay but little heed to their temporal necessities. The promise: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice and all these things shall be added unto you" (St.

Matt. vi. 33) is confirmed and corroborated on this occasion by our Lord in a visible manner, that all may see. Never does God abandon those who serve Him. If an earthly master considers it to be his strict duty, considers himself bound in honor to provide for all who are in his service, can it be supposed that the Lord of hosts will take less thought for His servants? If the Most High takes such care of His irrational creatures that the Psalmist, beholding this loving solicitude for their wants, exclaims in astonished rapture: "The eyes of all hope in Thee, O Lord, and Thou givest them meat in due season....Thou openest Thy hand and fillest with blessing every living creature" (Ps. cxliv. 15, 16), if, I say, this be so, is it possible that our Lord will forget His children, whom He has Himself adopted as His own? No, my soul, that cannot be; and if at any time He appears to be forgetful of you, look for the reason of this in yourself, in your doubts, your mistrust, in the fact that you place your hopes more in man than in God, since these are things which compel God to punish your want of confidence.

**2d.** Consider that the individual circumstances of this miracle afford further motives for an unbounded trust in God. Reflect in the first place on this: our Lord knew the pressing needs of the people, He knew them and cared for them as the merciful God that He is. "I have compassion on the multitude," He says. (v. 32.) Thus we see that God is fully aware of all our wants, and knowing them, shows Himself to be the infinitely bountiful and compassionate God. By the mouth of His prophet Isaias He declares: "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have mercy on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee." (Is. xlix. 15.) Thus God, the beneficent, the all-merciful God knows our necessities and forgets none of His children, a truth well calculated to awaken our confidence in Him. Nay more; He not only knows our present needs, He also knows our future needs, for He adds, speaking to His disciples: "If I shall send them away fasting to their homes they will faint in the way, for some of them came from afar off."

(St. Mark viii. 3.) O marvellous providence of our good God! He knows better than the destitute themselves what they require, for none of them bethought themselves that they would be exposed to feel faint from want of food, and be unable to reach their homes—otherwise they would not have remained so long in the desert, for life is dear to all of us. Now if God knows your necessities better than you do yourself, if He sees further than your limited sight can reach, abandon yourself trustfully to His providence. Do not be so careful for your body at the expense of your soul. And if you are a son or daughter of St. Francis, never allow yourself to forget that unbounded confidence in God's good providence is the fundamental virtue, the basis of your Order, that on this its stability, its welfare depends. Beware lest you, who by reason of the habit you wear profess yourself a "child of Providence," who, according to the assertion of our Seraphic Father, "receive your food at the table of God," beware lest you, in your anxiety to provide for yourself, in the worldly prudence your actions manifest, actually appear to place less trust in divine Providence than do the children of this world.

3d. Consider the reply of the disciples: "From whence can any man fill these here with bread in the wilderness?" (St. Mark viii. 4.) Oh how quickly men forget! Jesus had already fed several thousands in a desert place—then why this question? But all men are alike in that. Although God lavishes His benefits upon us, although He has hitherto never forsaken us, as soon as any fresh exigency is seen looming in the distance anxiety and doubt lay hold on us, and the strange question arises in our hearts: "Whence shall we have bread?" The Israelites in the wilderness invariably acted thus, and we do not do differently. Our memory is singularly short in regard to the divine benefits; whence it comes that we have so little trust, and what is worse, so little gratitude. Examine your own prayers and see what proportion of them are acts of thanksgiving. And yet you receive hourly benefits from the hand of God, benefits innumerable. Pass

in review the blessings God has bestowed on you—truly they form an ocean, an unfathomable ocean, whereas the streamlet of your scanty gratitude trickles forth drop by drop. How different was the conduct of our Seraphic Father! On one occasion when he and Brother Masseus were seated beside a spring, and the bread they had begged lay on a flat stone before them, at the sight of this sorry meal his heart overflowed with gratitude towards God, and he exclaimed in joyful accents: “O Brother, we are not worthy of these good things. Look, all that we have here is the gift of divine Providence.” The saint was thus thankful for a few scraps of bread begged as an alms, and you, my soul, do you give thanks for the abundance you enjoy? Will you not henceforth let your acts of thanksgiving be more frequent, more fervent? When and how shall you do this?

## FRIDAY AFTER THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON OUR LORD’S PASSION AS A MIRROR OF PATIENCE.

It is said that a vain person was once cured of her vanity in a singular manner. On taking up a hand-mirror to contemplate her charms, instead of her own fair features the agonized countenance of the thorn-crowned Saviour, disfigured, distorted by suffering, met her astonished gaze. An unknown hand had painted this affecting image on the surface of the glass. This lesson taught her how transient is human beauty, and how little cause man has to be vain. To-day, my soul, look into the mirror of our Lord’s sufferings, that you may behold in it the virtue of patience. Place Him before your mind in one of the scenes of His Passion while you meditate upon Him as your example.

**1st.** The patience displayed by holy Job is highly praised. God sent upon him one calamity after another.

He caused his flocks and herds to be carried off, his lands laid waste, his children suddenly killed, and himself to be struck with a very loathsome leprosy. In this grievous affliction Job, sitting on a dung-hill, does not murmur or rail against Almighty God; on the contrary he extols His holy name amid his sufferings in the ever memorable words: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job i. 21.) What great, what wonderfully great patience! Could it possibly be surpassed? Yes, it is surpassed by Jesus in His Passion. See how heavily, how unutterably heavily the chastising hand of the Lord weighs on Him. Job only lost temporal goods, whereas Jesus left the joys of Heaven for our sakes. Job was only afflicted in his property and his body; his honor, his life were not taken from him, whereas Jesus from the beginning to the end of His life dwelt in the uttermost poverty, and when covered with painful wounds from the sole of His foot to the crown of His head, He was in addition to this satiated with reproaches, despised and treated as the outcast of the people, and condemned to end His days by the most agonizing and ignominious death. Finally Job in his tribulation enjoyed the divine consolations; whereas from Jesus the bitter cry was wrung: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!" And yet never a single word of impatience passes His lips. If Job is a model of patience, the suffering Saviour is patience itself. But this is not all.

**2d.** Consider that immense patience is required to bear trials and cruel sufferings willingly, as Job bore them. It requires yet greater patience to bear the insults and cruel speeches which are sometimes our portion in our afflictions, and which greatly aggravate them, as Job bore them, without cherishing in his heart any ill-will or rancor against the inhuman foes who thus tormented him. But his patience is undeniably the greatest of all who not merely refrains from taking revenge on his enemies, though he could easily do so, but even renders them good for evil. Such was the patience of our suffering Lord. Oh do but raise your eyes to the cross, look into this mir-



ror of incomparable patience. Crushed and tortured as He is with racking pain, the scorn and derision of the Pharisees which He continually hears expressed around Him are a terrible addition to the agony He endures, and serve to embitter His last hours, when even the greatest criminals are left in peace. And the Lord, who with a nod could annihilate those blasphemers, not only tolerates their hideous cruelty in silence, but—listen and marvel, O my soul!—the last prayer that escapes the pallid lips of their Victim ere He expires is a prayer for His tormentors. O patience of my Jesus, how thou dost put me to shame!

**3d.** Consider that you, who are a disciple of the crucified Redeemer, you who are a Religious, pledged to follow Christ with the utmost fidelity, you who are a Priest, daily uniting yourself in Holy Communion with Jesus, the model of patience, do not yet even equal Job, much less Jesus, in regard to patience. If you are put out of temper by the annoyances and minor trials of daily life, how would it be if the Lord were to lay His hand so heavily upon you as it was laid upon Jesus, your great example? Keep in mind this truth, that the perfection of the Christian and above all of the Religious consists pre-eminently in bearing patiently the afflictions and contrarieties of daily life. Our Seraphic Father St. Francis says that among all the gifts of the Holy Ghost which Jesus Christ conferred on His servants, the principal is this, the power to conquer oneself, and for the love of God to endure sufferings and injuries willingly. We have nothing, the saint adds, whereof we can boast, but yet we participate in the tribulations which we bear for the love of God, and in these we may glory—as the Apostle says: “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Gal. vi. 14.)

And now, my soul, to show that you have not in vain looked to-day in this wondrous mirror of exalted patience, begin from this very hour to bear with equanimity all the annoyances you may meet with in the course of the day.

## SATURDAY AFTER THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON PROGRESS IN VIRTUE.

Represent to yourself, my soul, the Saviour standing in His indescribable majesty, teaching the people who are assembled around Him; or imagine yourself to be kneeling in solitude and silence before the tabernacle, in presence of your God, who, hidden beneath the eucharistic veil, graciously addresses to you this loving exhortation: "Be you perfect as also your heavenly Father is perfect." (St. Matt. v. 48.) It is indeed a great, a holy, but a most difficult task which our Lord proposes to us. To attain the goal He sets before us demands much toil and labor. We must not stand idle for a single moment, and indeed it is the bounden duty of every Christian, of every Priest and Religious more especially, to advance daily in virtue. Now at the close of the week meditate seriously upon this, your daily task.

1st. Consider that as in the order of nature, so in the order of grace, in the spiritual life, nothing can remain stationary. One must either advance or recede, increase or decrease, become better or worse. Everywhere we find this law in force, whether we look at nature or our own spiritual being. Everything in the world is subject to continual change, and man most of all, for of him Job says: "Man fleeth as a shadow and never continueth in the same state." (Job xiv. 2.) Wherefore since nothing in the world continues for any time in the same condition, and this rule applies equally to the spiritual life, you will do well to lay to heart this admonition that Cassian gives: "We must devote ourselves with unceasing assiduity and continual anxiety to the acquisition of virtue lest, instead of increasing, we should decrease in it. The human mind is not capable of remaining ever in one

and the same posture; that is to say, it is impossible that it should neither grow in virtue nor suffer loss. He who does not become greater becomes less; for as soon as the desire ceases to go onward and make progress, he is exposed to the danger of receding." Just as the wheel of a lathe—we quote St. Bernard's words—runs back when it is left to itself, so a man must of necessity go backward if he ceases to go forward in virtue.

If the saints speak thus, my soul, it is evident that the complaint which is so often heard from your lips: "I do not know how it is, but I am always where I was," cannot be true; and even if you were content to stand still, and said with the monk of old: "I will stay as I am," St. Bernard would reply to you as he did to him: "Thou dost desire what is impossible, for what is there in the world which has any permanence?"

2d. Consider that those who make no progress in justice cannot possibly please God. Open the Scriptures, and on every page you will find exhortations to strive after perfection, to advance in virtue. Nay more, our Lord attaches a sentence of condemnation to the non-observance of this command. What had the idle servant done that his lord should reject him? He is accused of no wicked act; he had not squandered the talent, he only laid it by without making any use of it. Why then was he to be punished? For this reason: because the money entrusted to him by his lord was found in his possession in its original amount; he had not gained anything to add to the sum. St. Chrysostom explains in a forcible manner why such a one could not be pleasing to God. Listen to what he says on this point: "If a husbandman, in all other respects a worthy man, were to persist in letting his hands lie idle in his lap, and would not plow or sow, would he not richly deserve to be reprimanded? Or if one of your hands were paralyzed, so that you could not use it, should you not consider this a great calamity, though it did not cause you any pain? Again: What worse thing can be said of a piece of land than that it is sterile and yields no fruit, even when it is well tilled and

cultivated? Now if the field of your heart, though it be industriously tilled and moistened with the dew of so many graces, proves such an ungrateful and barren soil that it produces no fruit, is not that most sad and deplorable?" Lay to heart what the saint here says, and for the future, in order that you may please God more, do not only examine your conscience in regard to the sins you have committed, but see what progress you have made in virtue and in a godly life.

**3d.** Consider that he is not worthy of the name of a monk who does not advance in sanctity. Thus to make progress is the duty, the task, the calling of the Religious. This is the distinction between those who live in the cloister and those who live in the world; the latter will be saved if they simply keep the commandments of God. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (St. Matt. xix. 17); thus our Lord spoke to the rich young man. But in order to be perfect, it was necessary for him to do more, and that he certainly did not do. The Religious should desire to be perfect, he ought to be perfect. "His state," as St. Thomas teaches, "is a state of perfection, not because at the time of embracing it he is expected to be perfect, but because it is his paramount duty to strive after perfection. He is no true Religious who does not do his utmost to attain it; because he neglects to do the one thing for which he entered the cloister." Meditate upon these words of the Angelic Doctor, my soul; ask yourself whether you really deserve the name of a monk, of a nun; ask yourself whether during the three, the ten, the twenty years or more of your Religious life, you have fulfilled this duty, the duty of ever advancing in virtue. Perhaps you have good reason to strike your breast; perhaps after this examination of your conscience you will for the first time know what it is to feel truly humble, to think little of yourself, and you will send up to Heaven the fervent prayer: "Lord, let the fig-tree alone this year also until I dig about it and dung it, if happily it bear fruit." Lose no time in setting about this work of digging.

## THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE DAY.

Imagine that you see Jesus passing through Samaria, journeying up to Jerusalem. On the same road there are ten lepers; as soon as they descry the great Worker of miracles, a gleam of joy lights up their features, distorted by that fell disease; a new hope animates the unhappy sufferers for whom human science knows no cure, and they lift up their voices in accents of pathetic entreaty, imploring: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" This is a most touching scene.

**1st.** Consider how loathsome and painful a malady leprosy is. How horribly it disfigures the human body, formed by the master-hand of the Most High, and deprives it of all its pristine beauty. The fair soft skin is covered with disgusting sores, no less revolting to the smell than to the sight. Add to this the racking pains that torment the sufferer day and night, the feverish heat and convulsive throbs; and remember, to crown all, that those unfortunate creatures are excluded from the companionship of their fellow men, and must needs waste away in sad and hopeless solitude. With deep compassion you will exclaim: What a life, far worse, far bitterer than death itself! And yet, my soul, there is something more terrible, more revolting than leprosy; it is mortal sin, the leprosy of the soul. For this does much more than stamp its devastating, defacing impress on the body; it deforms and destroys that which is God's own image, the immortal soul. The soul that is stained with mortal sin is more disgusting in God's sight than the body which is devoured by leprosy, and the stings of conscience cause it to ache and smart with pain more acute than that which the swellings of leprosy inflict upon the body. And if

the leper on account of his hideous malady is shut out for life from genial intercourse with his kind, spiritual leprosy does more, for it deprives the soul of blissful communion with God, and of the company of the saints, not only for time, but for all eternity. Meditate upon this, meditate upon it in all its horror. You would consider it impossible, or at any rate most foolish and imprudent to embrace a leper, to eat with him out of the same dish, to share his bed; you shrink in disgust from the mere idea of such a thing. Why then do you not shrink from the touch of that far worse leprosy, the leprosy of the soul, mortal sin, and from close communion with it?

**2d.** Consider the healing of the lepers. Their malady is in itself incurable. No human skill has power to deliver them from that terrible affliction; One alone can do this, Jesus, and to Him they appeal. "Whom when He saw, He said, Go show yourselves to the priests. And it came to pass as they went they were made clean." (St. Luke xvii. 14.) In the manner whereby their cure was effected the deliverance from the spiritual leprosy of sin is typified. Hear how St. Antony of Padua expounds this passage. The word "Go," according to the teaching of the saint, signifies the first step in conversion, when the contrite soul rouses herself to do penance and resolves to forsake sin and avoid the occasion of sin. The words: "Show yourselves" signify public confession, the manifestation of one's spiritual state, both before the tribunal of one's own conscience and also "to the priests." Furthermore, as the lepers were cleansed by our Lord's wondrous mercy while they were on their way to the priests, so it often happens that a sinner is, through the operation of divine grace, enabled to conceive supernatural, perfect contrition, and is thus freed from sin, and yet it is indispensable for him to "show himself to the priests." Only through the instrumentality of the Priest can the soul be duly and rightly cleansed, and even in cases where confession is impossible, and perfect compunction suffices to wash away sin, one must at least be on one's way to the Priest; that is, one must have the will, the intention to go to confes-

sion as soon as circumstances permit. Mark this well. You may perhaps shed floods of tears, you may be almost in despair on account of your sins, you may impose on yourself the severest penances, yet our Lord only heals you if you are on your way, whilst you are going to the Priest; never without sincere and full confession on your part. Are your confessions always of this nature? Are you willing, are you always ready when it is necessary or salutary, to "go to the priests," or do you postpone as long as possible approaching the Sacrament of Penance? Examine yourself on this point; it is of no slight importance; form such resolutions concerning it as are suitable for a Priest or a Religious, who is bound to preserve the utmost purity of heart.

**3d.** Consider another meaning which may be found in the words: "Go show yourselves to the priests." Almighty God is pleased to make men the channels of His grace; through them, through them alone He communicates His favors to souls. This is pre-eminently the case in regard to Priests, the directors of souls, ecclesiastical Superiors. Hence it is of paramount importance in the spiritual life to be frank and candid in conferring upon such matters with one's director or Superior. Not only does your spiritual advancement depend upon the observance of this rule, but under certain circumstances your eternal salvation. Try to remember how often in the course of your life, especially in seasons of temptation, sincerity has been of the greatest service to you, or reticence has been most baneful. Nothing, says St. Dorotheus, gives the devil greater pleasure than to meet with some one who conceals his temptations. He knows he is certain of vanquishing him, because it is a conflict of one against one, as Holy Scripture tells us: "Woe to him that is alone, for when he falleth, he hath none to lift him up." (Eccles. iv. 10.) Nothing on the other hand annoys him more than to see his artifices disclosed; then he loses courage and all hope of victory and takes to flight. "He who opens his heart freely and candidly to his confessor," says Cassian, "is safe against the assaults and delusions of

the evil one." Bear in mind these maxims of the saints, my soul; examine your past life; see whether your experience does not confirm the truth of them; then make a resolution that in future in such matters you will prefer humble frankness to proud reserve, for this will assuredly conduce to your soul's health; and it may even be with you as with the lepers: you may experience relief from violent temptations whilst you are going to the Priest; that is, when you once have fully determined to manifest your conscience openly to him.

## MONDAY AFTER THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE RECITATION OF THE DIVINE OFFICE IN CHOIR.

(Those who do not say the divine Office in choir, may consider this meditation as applying equally to ordinary prayer before Jesus in the tabernacle. Every Priest, and indeed every devout Christian, will, if possible, spend some part of every day in adoration of the hidden God who is present upon our altars.)

Think upon the solemn moment when you take your place in the choir to chant the praises of God. During this service no tapers are lighted on the altar, for those who sing the psalms ought themselves to be mystic lights, kindled by holy fervor, consumed by ardent love, as they stand in the presence of the adorable Sacrament. The divine Office is truly a grand, a sublime act of worship!..

**1st.** Consider the divine praises as they are sung in Heaven. Soar aloft in spirit to the realms of celestial brightness, where the vast choir of angels and saints, standing around the throne of the triune God, unite their voices in that glorious ascription of praise, the *Sanctus*. St. John was once privileged to gaze on that wondrous sight; he beheld that heavenly choir "round about the



throne, and the number of them was thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction. And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard all saying: To Him that sitteth on the throne and to the Lamb, benediction, and glory, and power for ever and ever." (Ap. v. 11-13.) How marvellous is this tribute of praise raised by the shining choirs of cherubim and seraphim, sung by the countless multitude of glorious apostles and prophets, by the white-robed army of martyrs, by the company of virgins who bear lilies in their hand. What words can describe those enchanting harmonies, what words can depict aright the grandeur and majestic beauty of the song those choirs sing? Do you feel no longing stir within you, my soul, to be permitted one day to unite your voice to that celestial ascription of praise?

But for this it is not necessary to look forward to some future day; you can, even now, at the present time, at least to a certain extent satisfy this desire.

**2d.** Consider how the earthly choirs sing the divine praises. The Office is recited in presence of the Most Holy Sacrament, before the tabernacle where Almighty God is pleased to dwell in mysterious silence, and we grieve to say, too often in complete solitude. Whilst the jubilant song of blessed spirits, standing before the throne, fills the courts of Heaven, how seldom does a hymn of praise raise up from before that throne of God on earth; in how many of our churches does He abide for weeks, nay months, alone and unheeded, without a single tribute of praise resounding to His glory. Do you not feel your heart burn within you at the thought of this neglect? Do you not feel impelled by it to hasten with joy and gladness to the choir, in the company of your Brethren, your Sisters, that there, before that "throne of the Lamb," you may fill an angel's part? Yes verily, Priests, Religious, assembled in presence of the Most Holy Sacrament to recite the Office,

are the earthly representatives of the angels. The ground on which they stand is hallowed, the language they make use of in their prayer is hallowed, the psalms they intone are hallowed, and the same sacred words resound on earth as in Heaven, *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus*; Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Sabaoth. Well may St. Cyril of Jerusalem exclaim: "The choir-monks, singing the praises of God, are perfectly aware that they represent the angels on earth." And St. Laurence Justinian says: "In the recitation of the divine Office man holds with God, and God with man sweet, enjoyable, gladsome converse, fraught with ineffable delight." But alas! you do not hasten, you rather loiter on your way to the choir, and perform this angel's service in an indifferent, unwilling manner, as if you had to do something disagreeable; you cannot repeat the divine praises fast enough, in order to exchange as soon as possible the work the angels love to perform for the contemptible inanities of earth. Whence comes this? Can you imagine this to be the way to prepare yourself for joining the heavenly choirs?

3d. Consider that the prayer and praises you recite in the choir are not merely a type of the worship of Heaven, but also a most efficacious means of spiritual progress for yourself and your fellow men. Standing before our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, in the company of pious, devout souls, you are in a place which in itself is hallowed ground. From the walls the pictures, the images of saints, of the saints of your own Order, who now chant joyously in Heaven the psalms they recited devoutly on earth, look down upon you with approval and encouragement. Standing, I say, amid such surroundings, the fervor of your devotion must surely be more hotly kindled, you must feel yourself inspired with greater ardor in prayer for your soul's salvation there than elsewhere. Consider further what St. Justin says on this subject: "The praise we sing to the glory of God excites within the breast a holy longing for that which forms the subject of our song; it eliminates the unruly promptings and desires of the flesh, it counter-

acts the wily suggestions of the devil, and it is the best remedy for sadness of heart. For the divine Office is composed of the words of God and the sayings of His saints, and these are powerful weapons for resisting the hellish foe." And as for the benefit this, your act of worship, is to the world in general, only consider, my soul: At the moment when the bell summons you to recite your Office, how many millions of your brethren in the world groan beneath the burden of enforced labor; how many thousands of your sisters toss in pain upon a bed of sickness; how many hundreds of your fellow men are guilty of sins which cry to Heaven for vengeance. Do you not feel yourself impelled, inspired, to sanctify the wearisome toil, to alleviate the grievous sufferings, to make atonement for the crimes of your fellow men by the service of praise and prayer which you are by God's grace called to offer? Such is the great intercessory, propitiatory power of the prayers you recite in choir. Wherefore from henceforth apply yourself to this exercise with increased assiduity and devotion; banish distractions; remember the example given us by our Seraphic Father, who once threw a dish of food into the fire, the thought of which had intruded itself upon him at his prayers, saying: "I will offer it up to the Lord, whose sacrifice it was the means of marring." When the bell again calls you to the choir, lay aside whatever you are doing, leave everything as it is, and hasten to worship as the angels do before the throne of the Lamb.

**TUESDAY AFTER THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY  
AFTER PENTECOST.**

**ON ST. PETER'S CONFESSION OF CHRIST.**

You have, my soul, accompanied our Lord on His apostolic journeys as far as the desert, where He for the second time supplied food for the multitude by a miraculous multiplication of the loaves; now imagine yourself witnessing a scene enacted in the regions about Cæsarea Philippi, whither He subsequently proceeded, when St. Peter made his glorious confession of Christ. Imagine that you see before you that great apostle at the time when our Lord addressed to His disciples that decisive question: "But whom do you say that I am?" (St. Matt. xvi. 15.) Let the answer St. Peter made to this query form the subject of your meditation to-day.

**1st.** At the time of which we speak public opinion was divided in regard to Jesus Christ. Some people said that He was John the Baptist, others that He was Elias re-appearing on earth, or Jeremias, or one of the prophets. All these surmises came short of the truth, that alone found utterance from Peter's lips when he made the solemn confession: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." (v. 16.) Every word of this short sentence is full of meaning. It summarizes as briefly as possible the fundamental truths of Christianity. Consider this: the apostle says: "Thou art Christ;" and he thereby enunciates the dogma of the incarnation of the Redeemer, the incarnation whereby the Son of God became the Christ, the Messiah. The word Christ also conveys to the mind the object and purpose of the incarnation, accomplished in the three offices which the Christ, the anointed of the Lord, the Redeemer filled: that is, the office of King, of Priest, of Prophet. Furthermore in the confession:

“Thou art the Son of God,” the apostle formulates the dogma of the divinity of the Messias, and by the addition of the word living, “the living God,” the confession in its entirety is made to comprehend the doctrine of the Holy Trinity as well, the mystery of the threefold personality of the living God. For since Jesus is the Son of God, “the Son of the living God,” this living and true God whose Son He is can be no other than God the Father; and since Jesus is at the same time the Christ, He is so in virtue of the unction of the Holy Ghost, according to the testimony given by the prophet Isaias: “The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him” (Is. xi. 2.) How grand, how replete with wondrous meaning is this confession uttered by the apostle’s lips! Meditate upon it, my soul, plunge yourself as it were in thought into the depths of these mysteries; and if you are lost in admiration at St. Peter’s faith, remember that it is your own also, for your belief is one and the self-same as his, and contains equally in a few short words truths infinite and eternal.

2d. Consider how Jesus Himself, apparently astonished at this bold and marvellous confession of faith on the apostle’s part, exclaims: “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona; because flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father who is in Heaven.” (v. 17.) Here two things may be remarked: Our Lord in the first place declares Peter to be blessed on account of his profession of faith. Well mayst thou be called happy and congratulated, O Simon, because thou art the first to proclaim truths of such deep import, so rich in consolation; because thy lips, before those of any other man, have acknowledged and confessed Him who is the world’s salvation. Every one, moreover, is to be called blessed who holds this same faith the apostle held, and amongst this number you are to be found, my soul. O think to-day of the happiness, the privilege of possessing the true Faith. And in order the better to appreciate the blessedness of enjoying the light of Faith, look at those who are in the darkness of unbelief or error. In the first part of this

meditation you considered the depth and sublimity of the Faith you profess; now endeavor to realize the plenitude and riches of grace and encouragement which this Faith affords you in all circumstances of your life, and then you will understand aright the high commendation our Lord bestowed on the apostle's confession. You will also be able to understand what Brother Giles meant when he said: "If there was a man endowed with perfect faith, that man must infallibly attain the summit of sanctity in a short time and enjoy complete certitude in regard to his eternal salvation." Now proceed to consider the second point to be remarked in our Lord's answer.

3d. He makes use of the expression: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." In these words our Lord lays down the weighty truth that the light of revealed religion never does and never can proceed from "flesh and blood," that is to say, from any natural source, from any human, earthly fount of knowledge. It is not the result of human research, the product of the human intellect; it comes from above, from God. Faith is a gift of divine grace. How much food for thought this short sentence contains. If Faith is a grace from God, it can only be received and held fast by humble souls, for Holy Scripture tells us: "God giveth grace to the humble." (St. James iv. 6.) If Faith is a grace from God, then the acceptance and propagation of that Faith does not come within the sphere of man's independent action; close acquaintance with its doctrines, the ability to demonstrate their truth, to expound them, to publish them, is not sufficient; assistance from on high is an indispensable factor, and this assistance is obtained mainly by prayer. Reflect upon these truths, my soul. You may gather from them many useful, practical suggestions; let the result of this meditation be to create within you a determination for yourself to cultivate the virtue of humility, lest you lose the Faith through pride, as many thousands have done; and for your fellow men daily to pray that they may receive the gift of Faith. Thus you will become an apostle of prayer, a missionary, a Gospel messenger without leaving your ora-

tory. Perhaps in the last great day you will meet with many who owe it to your prayers and religious exercises that to them as to Peter the welcome words are addressed: "Blessed art thou!"

## WEDNESDAY AFTER THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE PROMISE OUR LORD MADE TO ST. PETER.

St. Peter made a great and glorious confession of Christ, and now Christ makes a great and glorious promise to him. Picture to yourself the Saviour as He stands among His apostles in His divine majesty and dignity, and solemnly appoints Peter to be the head of the new Church which He, the Christ, will found, saying: "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (St. Matt. xvi. 18.) This is indeed a great, a marvellous promise.

**1st.** Consider the words our Lord addresses to Simon: "Thou art a rock." Shortly before the apostle had solemnly declared what his Master was: "Thou art Christ;" and now in recompense of this faith and profession the Master declares to him what he is: "Thou art Peter," that is to say, thou art what the word Peter signifies: a rock. The special property of a rock is to be firm and immovable, so as to withstand all assaults directed against it, and it is this quality, this particular grace which our Lord promises to the apostle as the reward of his glorious confession. And indeed he proved himself a steadfast rock by the courage and strength of his faith. His denial of Christ did, it is true, for a moment cause that rock to totter to its very foundations, but afterwards the great apostle was on that account all the more firmly established in his faith; and neither the threats of the Sanhedrim nor the scourging inflicted on him by the Jews, neither his arrest by Herod's orders nor his condemna-

tion to the death of the cross could induce the man, well named the rock, to waver in his profession of faith: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." While you meditate upon the rock-like faith of the apostle, turn your eyes upon yourself, my soul. Are you also a rock, washed by the changeful tide of public opinion, lashed by the stormy billows of temptation, exposed to the impact of human respect, of human favor, and yet standing immovable and unshaken, swerving not an inch from divine revelation, from the commandments of God, or are you a reed bending to and fro, shaken by every breath of wind? Ask yourself this question, and then make it your earnest endeavor, your earnest prayer that of you also the words may be true: "Thou art a rock."

**2d.** Consider what our Lord adds: "And upon this rock I will build My Church." Having declared what Peter is, our Lord proceeds to reveal what, in consequence of his strength of character, His designs are in regard to him; on him, the rock, He will build His Church. Observe here, my soul, how solemn is the announcement Christ vouchsafes to make to St. Peter in the presence of the apostles; in these words He first of all appoints Peter to be the foundation whereon the divine structure, the Church in its visible and earthly form shall be erected; and at the same time in the second place He gives the reason why the apostle is selected to be that foundation because he is a rock, and accordingly possesses the qualities required for the support of the building, firmness, immovability, permanence. Ponder well, my soul, this vocation of the apostle. He is to be the basis of the visible Church on earth; therefore on him the Church rests; without him she can have no permanent existence, and every portion of the whole building as well as every pillar is upheld and supported by him. The other apostles and their successors in the sacred ministry together with the communities of the faithful who are subject to them likewise rest upon this one, sure foundation, upon Peter and his successors, the supreme Pontiffs, the see of Rome. How clearly and plainly is this truth to be seen in our



Lord's declaration! Where Peter is, there is the Church. Thus if you would be a faithful son, a good daughter of the Church, you must abound in loyalty and affection for him who is the foundation of the Church, the occupant of the chair of Peter. This our Seraphic Father enjoined most urgently upon his children, and in this he himself set them a radiant example; follow that example, and pray daily for the unhappy individuals who have in their fatal delusion forsaken this rock and thereby severed themselves from the Church of Christ.

3d. Consider our Lord's concluding words: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." In days of yore the infernal regions, or hell, were supposed to be closed by ponderous gates which, when once shut behind those who entered, rendered egress impossible. They were said to be of invincible strength, and thus they have passed into a proverb to express the greatest solidity and force. Hence absolutely nothing, not even the most tremendous power and might, symbolized by the "gates of hell" can prevail against this divinely founded structure, the Church—can shatter or destroy it. The pages of history afford striking testimony to the manner in which this promise has been accomplished. Let your thoughts dwell awhile upon all the assaults which adverse powers have made upon the Church; reflect upon the temptations, the heresies, the schisms, the revolutions which, like a terrific, tempestuous flood have dashed against this house built upon a rock, the Church of God, without being able to prevail against it, to overthrow it; and then you will see clearly what is the rock upon which it rests; you will be amply convinced of its divine character; you will feel your heart overflow with love and gratitude towards God who has so marvelously fulfilled His gracious promise, and you will resolve afresh to live, to labor, and to die as a true and loyal child of this great and glorious Church.

## THURSDAY AFTER THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE DAILY PRACTICE OF SELF-DENIAL.

After our Lord had given St. Peter the solemn promise that on him, the rock, His Church should be built, He proceeded to make another and a less consolatory declaration to him and to the other apostles. He announced to them His approaching Passion and death. This announcement was the occasion of a reprimand to the apostle. Imagine that you see him at the moment when our Lord, as the Evangelist relates (St. Matt. x. 22), has just shown that He must be delivered up to the high priests and be put to death. These tidings fall like a thunderbolt on the fiery temperament of the disciple; in his ardent affection for Jesus he repudiates the idea of such a thing.

1st. He therefore says to our Lord: "Be it far from Thee, Lord, this shall not be to Thee." What is Christ's rejoinder? "Go behind Me, Satan; thou art a scandal unto Me, because thou savorest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men." (v. 23.) How sternly St. Peter is rebuked! Only yesterday he was extolled as "blessed," to-day he is denounced as "Satan." Do not let the severity of the reprimand astonish you, however, my soul. For, although of course without the slightest intention on his part, nay, without the least suspicion of what he was doing, by endeavoring to persuade Jesus to relinquish His design and fly from His prospective suffering, he was in reality playing into Satan's hands, since it was precisely by means of that Passion that the adversary of mankind was to be vanquished. He "savored the things that are of men;" that is to say, he acted from purely human motives, being led away by feelings of compassion and sympathy, and lost sight of "the things that

are of God," the divine plan of redemption. Hence our Lord spoke thus sternly, in order to open the apostle's eyes. Mark this, my soul, for your own instruction: Every thought of your heart which tends to deter you from acts of self-denial, every person who seeks to make you avoid suffering, is consciously or unconsciously a help-mate of the devil. If any one takes you aside, as Peter did our Lord, and whispers in your ear: "Be that far from you, that life is too austere for you, God does not require so much self-denial from you," instantly say: "Away from me, Satan!" Most justly does St. Peter Damian declare that no man can live as he ought to live in this mortal existence, if the sweetness is not mixed with bitterness, if its joys are not tempered by sorrows. Eliminate suffering from the lot of man, and human nature must of necessity incline to evil. When on one occasion the thought suggested itself to our Seraphic Father that he should spare himself a little, he instantly perceived the idea to be a temptation of the devil, and redoubled his austerities. Do you act in this manner, my soul?

**2d.** Consider our Lord's words: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." (v. 24.) In diametrical opposition to the desire expressed by the apostle, that He should fly from the cross, our Lord lays down as a condition for all who would follow Him, that they take up their cross and walk in His footsteps. Not only is it necessary for Him, the Master, to die; each and every one who wishes to become His disciple must likewise die, must die to his own will. This death, this renunciation of self, consists, as St. Basil teaches, in completely forgetting all that appertains to our former sinful life, and entirely giving up one's own will, so that a man may be subject wholly and solely to the will of God, and of the Superior whom God has placed over him, just as if he were in reality dead, for a dead body can have no will. How far are you, my soul, although you profess to be a disciple of our Lord, from possessing this essential qualification of a disciple? And do you know the reason of this? It is because you have

overlooked one little word which St. Luke places on our Lord's lips (ch. ix. 23) "let him take up his cross *daily*." It is not sufficient for the attainment of the lofty aim set before you, that for a certain period you practise mortification and self-denial; you must make it your daily exercise, or you will never climb the height which our Lord would have you reach. If, St. John Climacus says, you allow a single day to pass without some act of mortification, be assured that you have suffered a great loss; regard that day as wasted, and say to yourself: To-day I have not been a true Religious. Now ask yourself, my soul, since when and to what extent are you a true Religious.

**3d.** Consider the words wherewith our Lord concludes: "For he that will save his life, shall lose it; and he that shall lose his life for My sake, shall find it." (v. 25.) Thus we see that it is not enough that we should regard our first feeling of repugnance for mortification and self-renunciation as a temptation of the devil, as we learnt from the first point of this meditation; it is not enough for us to accept the carrying of the cross as our daily work and calling, as was shown us in the second point that we considered; we must, in conformity with our Lord's teaching, furthermore see in this the greatest gain and blessing for our soul, that we should find it, i.e., insure its eternal salvation, by this very means, by losing it through self-renunciation. "That is a great and mysterious saying," St. Augustine exclaimed on reading the words quoted above, "that a man's love for his own soul is the means of its loss, and his hatred for it the means of preventing that loss." It is indeed a mysterious doctrine, but a true one. If you hate your life, your soul, in time, that is, if you mortify all your natural inclinations, it will live to all eternity. Nay more; even in this earthly existence the soul will find its felicity, the life of bliss, if it is truly mortified. Only look around you. Who possesses the most peace of heart, who enjoys the greatest consolations in prayer, who experiences the deepest fervor and devotion at the altar, the mortified or the unmortified Religious? And in regard to the body, who is most hampered

by corporal necessities, who feels privations most keenly, the Brother or Sister who mortifies the body, or the one who seeks to secure creature comforts? And when at last we stand on the threshold of eternity, in the presence of death, which can hope to fare the best, the body that has been well chastened or that which was studied and pampered? Thus it will be seen that, look at the subject from whichever side we will, both for soul and body, both for time and eternity, true wisdom lies in following the maxim our Lord enunciated, and on which we have meditated to-day. Say then, my soul, what course will you pursue?

## FRIDAY AFTER THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE DEATH-BED OUR LORD CHOSE FOR HIMSELF.

Represent to yourself the awful, the heartrending scene, when our Lord having reached the summit of Calvary, and having been rudely stripped of His garments, prepares to stretch Himself upon the hard cross. The cross then is the couch whereon He will breathe out His sacred soul! What a death-bed for Him!

**1st.** Consider that Jesus expires in the practice of obedience. Patient as a lamb led to the slaughter, without a murmur, without offering the slightest opposition, the Saviour, forsaken and destitute, stretches Himself upon the cross. There He lies, an unresisting victim, as Isaac was in times gone by. This is the last act of obedience which He performs on earth, the last link in the chain of the acts of obedience of which His life was an unbroken series; it is the accomplishment of the Apostle's words: "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even to the death of the cross." (Phil. ii. 8.) The spirit of obedience which led Him to the crib now leads Him to the cross. As out of obedience He lay in that, so out of

obedience He lies on this. In obedience He began His life in Bethlehem, He ends it in obedience on Calvary. My soul, what feelings do these thoughts arouse in you? How will it be with you when you lie on your death-bed? Shall you lie down upon it as the last link in a long golden chain of acts of obedience? Will it be for you a hard or a soft couch? If you wish to know, listen and I will tell you. Your death-bed will be soft if you lie down upon it as one already dead; it will be hard if you do so as one still living. All depends upon the extent in which you follow the instructions of the Seraphic Father, St. Francis, who having confined a disobedient Brother in a dark dungeon, said to him: "Art thou dead, Brother?" The penitent monk answered: "Yes, Father, I deserve to die on account of my sin." Touched by this humble reply, the saint bade the monk go forth, if he was truly dead. "Obey," he said, "the minutest sign of your Superior's wishes, and offer no more resistance to his commands than a dead body would, which is incapable of withstanding anything. I want dead men, not living, for my followers."

If, my soul, you are still living in the sense in which St. Francis employed the term, cast yourself to-day with our Lord upon His death-bed.

**2d.** Consider the extreme poverty that marks our Lord's death-bed, and His extreme poverty when He places Himself upon it. Every one, even the poorest beggar, has a pillow whereon to rest his head at the last, or at any rate the earth provides him with one; he has a covering wherein to wrap himself, or at least his own clothes are left to him. Jesus had not even those. As He had no birthplace as other men have, so He was destitute of the death-bed which is the portion of ordinary mortals. His couch is the cross, His pillow the crown of thorns, His shroud is the wounds, the streaming blood, that cover His mangled body. This is indeed the utmost limit of poverty which our Lord practises; as He began His life with it, so with it He ends His life. Ask yourself, my soul, what impression does the sight of this most poverty-stricken of death-beds,

of the unspeakable poverty in which the Redeemer died, make on you? How will it be with you when you lie on your death-bed? Will your departure out of this world be a poor parting from a poor existence to enter upon one that is infinitely rich and eternal? You are a Priest; you hold daily in your hands Jesus in His poverty, and those hands ought to be the hands of one at least poor in spirit. You are a Religious. Poverty is your vocation, and God grant that you may be able to take as your own the words of St. Francis: "Lord Jesus, show me the path of poverty which Thou didst love so well. Have compassion on me, for I too love poverty so fervently that without it I have no rest; and Thou knowest that Thou Thyself hast infused this love into my breast."

**3d.** Consider how hard and painful our Lord's death-bed was. Think how His torn and mangled body was extended upon the hard wood. Remember the excruciating pain caused by the nails wherewith He was fastened to the cross, and you will not think light of the agony of that death-bed. Think how He lay upon it, His eyes raised to Heaven, a victim upon the altar of the cross to make atonement for the sins of the world! It is the last sacrifice, the last act of renunciation, the last scene in the long drama of woe. What are your feelings, my soul, as you contemplate this death-bed? What will they be when you too lie on your death-bed? Will your death-bed also be an altar, whereon a self-denying Priest, a mortified Religious offers himself to God as a victim, offers the last oblation, the crowning act of a life of sacrifice? Such a victim, or to use St. Bonaventure's beautiful simile, such a stone, fashioned by the chisel of self-denial and mortification for the heavenly Jerusalem, was St. Francis. Stript of everything, he lay in ashes on the ground, his eyes fixed on Heaven, rapt in the contemplation of the glory that awaited him, with his left hand concealing the wound in his side, the stigmata impressed on his emaciated body. With his last breath he uttered these words: "I have finished the work given me to do, and I pray our Lord Jesus Christ to teach you what you ought to do." May Jesus indeed

teach us so to live that our death-bed may as nearly resemble the death-bed of our Lord as did that of our Seraphic Father.

## SATURDAY AFTER THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE MONASTIC CELL AND SOLITUDE.

Think of our Lord, either as dwelling alone in the seclusion of the tabernacle, or spending whole nights, as was His wont when on earth, in prayer alone upon Mount Olivet. Hear how He invites you to seek such solitude, saying: "When thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret." (St. Matt. vi. 6.) See my soul, how in accordance with this injunction solitude ought to be very dear to you, how as a Priest you ought to love a life of seclusion far from the world, and how the Religious ought to regard his cell as a beloved friend. The world, we well know, does not relish a retired life, and calls the monastic cell a prison.

**1st.** Consider this name of prison which the world gives to the quiet, lonely cell; it is no inappropriate name; your cell is a prison, but much in the same way as Noe's ark was a prison. He was not at liberty to move about as he pleased, but he was free, and secure against the deluge and its destructive billows. If the world were not deluged, you would indeed need no prison, no ark of safety, but now it is the means of your salvation; therefore you ought to rejoice in having a prison which will prevent your being cast into the everlasting dungeon of hell. How much better to wear the light fetters God lays on you, than to forge for yourself chains that to all eternity will not be removed. Living in the world, the body is free, but the soul is subject to the bondage of sin; here in your cell, in your solitude the body suffers a certain restraint, but the soul is



free, free to soar aloft and hold converse with God. O happy prison! How fortunate is the soul that dwells in solitude! "The soul that lives in solitude," we read in the revelations of Marie Lataste, "has her eye continually fixed upon herself; she is ever on the watch to observe whether her life is a constant progress towards God. Her eye is also fixed upon her enemies, lest they gain the advantage over her. Solitude is for the soul an eminence, whence the whole surrounding country is dominated. Moreover, the soul that lives in solitude has her eye fixed upon God; God speaks to her, and because she is alone she hears His voice the more readily, she is prepared to receive the graces He has in store for her." If my soul, you consider these three advantages of a life of seclusion, your prison will be your dearest dwelling-place, and you will exclaim with David: "This is my rest for ever and ever, here will I dwell." (Ps. cxxxi. 14.)

**2d.** The world calls the life of seclusion, the life of the cloister, a dreary banishment. It is truly a banishment, but one fraught with abundant blessings. It is a banishment from the miserable, deceptive joys and pleasures of the world, from the business of the world and the strife of the world. It is banishment from a barren desert into a fertile oasis, where the sparkling waters of grace spring up, where the tree of life casts a grateful shade. It is only the body that is lonely, the soul holds sweet, sacred intercourse with God and the saints. Hence all the saints delighted in solitude; it was their joy; in it they found courage and fortitude for life's conflicts, solace in sorrow, assistance in their work, and a blissful peace which is sought in vain midst the turmoil of the world. Happy banishment, here below most sweet and welcome, hereafter the means of preserving me from eternal exile! My soul, shut your door, conformably to the counsel of the author of the Imitation: "Shut thy door upon thee, and call to thee Jesus thy beloved. Stay with Him in thy cell, for nowhere else wilt thou find so great peace." (B. i. ch. 20.)

**3d.** The world calls the life of solitude a burial, the cell

a grave. Would that it were really a grave, a peaceful grave. In the grave our passions are laid to rest, the storms of life are stilled, strife and discord are at an end. The fire of concupiscence no longer consumes the body, nothing disquiets the soul, for while the body reposes in the grave, the soul lives with God. Let your cell be a grave to you, a grave in which your body rests while your soul is rapt in the contemplation of God and His infinite beauty. Let your cell be a grave, where, heedless of the noise of the busy world and all its tumult you can await the day of judgment and the resurrection of all men. Let your cell be to you a grave, where you may abide as one dead, dead to the world, dead to the attractions of the world, dead to your own will, able to repeat as your own the Apostle's words: "The world is crucified to me and I to the world." (Gal. vi. 14.) And however the world chooses to sneer at your life, a life hidden with Christ, whatever the dark colors in which Satan may portray your solitary life as a Priest, do you only follow the more closely than heretofore the excellent counsel we read in the Imitation of Christ: "Enter into thy chamber and shut out the tumult of the world. Thou wilt find in thy cell what thou wilt often lose abroad. Thy cell, if thou continue in it, grows sweet; but if thou keep not to it it becomes wearisome. If in the beginning of thy conversion thou didst well inhabit and keep thy cell, it would be to thee ever after a dear friend and most welcome solace." (B. i. ch. 20.)

## THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE DAY.

Set before your mind our Lord when, in His wondrous sermon on the Mount, He expounded to His disciples and to the assembled multitude the whole Christian code of faith and morals, and proclaimed those weighty maxims which contain the perfection of Christian practice. Place yourself among His audience, imagine that you hear from the divine Master's own lips the words of the Gospel of the day.

**1st.** "You cannot serve God and Mammon." (St. Matt. vi. 24.) Such is the statement the Saviour makes. Mammon is the god of riches, and whoso serves Mammon, cannot serve God as well. It must not, however, be thought that the possession of wealth is incompatible with the service of God; no, on the contrary, as St. Chrysostom teaches, it is quite possible to possess riches and property and yet serve God, as Abraham, Job, Sölomon, many saints and devout men have done and still do, by spending their substance on good works. In that case they do not forsake the service of God to serve Mammon, but rather make Mammon helpful to them in the service of God. Not so the avaricious, those who are immersed in material interests, who serve Mammon, who are his slaves; such bondman's service cannot be combined with the service of the free man, of the children of God. Consider this, my soul, in order to understand aright what our Lord declares, and from your meditation draw two practical conclusions. If you have earthly goods, do not serve them, but make them serve you, remembering what the blessed Brother Giles said: "How much sorrow and grief that unhappy man will have to endure, who sets his heart and hopes and aspirations upon earthly things, who for their sake neglects and finally loses heavenly things, since at the end he will, after

all, have to part with those earthly things." If on the other hand you have none of this world's goods, give thanks to God for not having laid upon you a weight which would have been more of a hindrance than a help to you in your upward way to Heaven; yet beware lest you think yourself superior to your richer neighbor, since St. Francis bids us remember that we ought to judge and despise no one but ourselves.

**2d.** Consider the further admonition our Lord gives us: "Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor do they reap, nor gather into barns, and your heavenly Father feedeth them." (v. 26.) By directing our attention to the birds of the air, who take no thought, He does not intend to prohibit all labor and solicitude on our part. Work is the lot, the duty of the sons of Adam; to them as to him, the words apply: "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread." (Gen. iii. xix.) It is still more the bounden duty of the children of St. Francis to labor, since shortly before his death our Seraphic Father declared: "I have labored and will labor with my hands, and it is my expressed wish that the other Brethren should all occupy themselves with some honest work." By what He here says, our Lord supposes that man should work, and His meaning is that we should not be too careful and anxious over our work, and think ourselves entirely dependent on the labor of our own hands for our sustenance, instead of looking for our maintenance from the hands of our heavenly Father. In respect to this St. Augustine remarks: "If we are really unable to work and provide for ourselves, then our heavenly Father will provide for us, as He feeds the birds of the air, who do not distress themselves about the future." Yes, my soul, you will do well to take example by the birds of heaven, whom our Seraphic Father liked much better than the ants, because they do not lay up a store for the winter time as the ants do. Nor should you burrow in the earth like the ants, or in your restlessness you will never seek rest in God; but when you have built your nest as the birds do, that is to say, when you have

provided for your most pressing needs, then imitate them in singing the praises of God, soar aloft on the pinions of meditation and the contemplative life, wing your flight to God and do not be careful as to what you shall eat and what you shall drink, since you serve Him who feedeth the birds.

**3d.** Consider our Lord's concluding words: "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." (v. 33.) The kingdom of God is the goal of our earthly pilgrimage, and justice is the way that conducts to that goal. If, faithful to our high calling, we walk in this way to our goal, God will not allow us to want; the necessary things shall be added to us, what is needful for the body will be supplied to us on our way.

Now my soul, consider how many men, and you perhaps are after all amongst the number, act in a directly opposite manner. They regard as essential what is merely accessory, the earthly things that are added; on them they expend all their care and all their exertions, thereby forgetting their true aim, and, burdened as they are by material interests, make no progress on the way to that goal. Unfortunate delusion! It does not make man happy here below; on the contrary, it overwhelms him with cares and sorrows, and hereafter casts him into misery still more terrible. See, my soul, that you pursue an opposite course of conduct. Go straight to the mark, strive to gain the kingdom of God, and be assured that in doing so you will not lack what is necessary for the body. Do not forget that as a Priest, as a Religious, you are, so to speak, the domestic servants of God, you belong to His household. Now we know that the upper servants of a king fulfil the duties of their calling, which brings them into the immediate presence of the sovereign, without troubling themselves about food and clothing, since with both their master provides them. In fact, it would be an insult to their king were they to neglect the special duties of their office, under the pretext of having to get their daily bread and see after their clothes. Why do you act like this in regard to

the King of Heaven? Will you not alter your conduct in this respect for the future? How shall you set about doing so?

## MONDAY AFTER THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE HEALING OF THE LUNATIC.

Whilst upon the heights of Thabor the wondrous transfiguration of our Lord took place, at the foot of the mountain a scene presenting a painful contrast to that glorious and entrancing sight was being enacted. An unfortunate boy, an epileptic, possessed by an evil spirit, is seized by a fit, and struggles, foaming at the mouth, in the arms of his afflicted father; our Lord's disciples endeavoring meanwhile by their exorcisms to cure him, but without success. (St. Luke ix. 38-43.)

1st. According to St. Jerome's interpretation this boy suffering from this terrible malady is a symbol of the unstable, inconstant Christian. As by his father's report, he falls at one time into the water, at another into the fire; oftentimes he cries out, and then casting himself down upon the ground, lies like one dead; so these unstable souls to-day display an ardent zeal for the practice of virtue, an unbounded abhorrence of sin, and by the morrow all their zeal has died out, their hatred of sin has disappeared; at one time the devil casts them into the fire of unruly passions, at another into the waters of tepidity and indifference. To-day one might think they were about to climb the highest summits of virtue, to-morrow they may be seen grovelling miserably upon the ground. O terrible and incurable malady, the existence of which Thomas à Kempis bewails in the following words: "As long as thou livest thou art subject to change, even against thy will; so as to be found sometimes joyful, at other times sad; now at peace, then troubled; now devout, now

without devotion; now full of zeal, now sluggish; now grave, now gay." (Imit. B. iii. ch. 33.)

What can you say of yourself in this respect, my soul? "He who is wise stands above all these changeable things," we are told in the Imitation. As a Priest, a Religious, you have long been a disciple in the school of wisdom, of heavenly wisdom; you may even have grown gray in that school, but without learning true wisdom. Bewail your past inaptness, and begin at last to strive to acquire greater stability of purpose.

**2d.** Consider how dangerous, how injurious this distressing malady must have been to its unhappy victim. Must not his powers have gradually wasted away in consequence of his being continually tormented by the evil spirit? Was he not in constant danger of meeting with an untimely death through being cast into the fire and into the water? And in like manner nothing is more prejudicial, more perilous to the soul than to be the prey of an evil spirit of changefulness, of instability. Souls that are thus inconstant never find any rest, never make any progress. They are like a ship without a rudder, that to-day is carried on its course by a favoring wind, to-morrow is driven backwards by an adverse blast; and it is greatly to be feared that the soul in such circumstances should at last grow weary and disgusted with the incessant vacillation, and no longer struggling against sin, should fall into irremediable and deplorable perdition. In view of these grave dangers do not neglect to implore this very day the inestimable grace of perseverance; for, as Brother Giles was wont to say, "What would it profit me were I to enjoy bliss like that of Heaven for a hundred years, and then after all not persevere, and so make a bad end?" St. Augustine says: "It is no great thing to begin well, but to end well, it is in that that perfection consists." To accomplish this, prayer is not all-sufficient.

**3d.** Consider that the disciples had made every effort to cast out the evil spirit by means of their prayers and exorcisms, but in vain. "This kind," our Lord says, "can go out by nothing but by prayer and fasting." (St. Mark ix.

28.) Hence we learn that something more than prayer is needed, something which, like fasting, is painful to human nature, which costs an effort, and demands self-conquest. You must fight bravely and withstand the spirit of instability; you must strive by means of mortification and self-chastisement to subdue it to your own will. Too many yield themselves to its sway without a struggle. To such persons St. Bonaventure gives in his meditations upon the life of Christ a salutary and instructive admonition, one which the Blessed Virgin herself gave to a holy soul. "Dost thou imagine," so spoke the holy Mother of God, "that all the graces I received were bestowed on me without any exertion on my part? Not so by any means. Let me tell thee that I did not acquire a single virtue without having earned it by strenuous effort, unremitting prayer, eager desire, humble devotion, countless tears and bodily austerities." And do you, a poor sinner, think that the gift of constancy will be granted you without toil or trouble? Reflect upon this, my soul, and make suitable resolutions as to the best means of overcoming your changeableness in future.

## TUESDAY AFTER THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE STRIFE FOR PRECEDENCE AMONG THE DISCIPLES.

We read that on one occasion the apostles disputed amongst themselves and contended with one another as to which of their number should be greatest in the kingdom of God, forming conjectures as to who should have the foremost place there. Although they took all the pains they could to conceal the subject of their dispute from their Master, yet He who reads the heart knew just as well as if He had been told what was going on in their minds, and called them to account for it. Keep this incident before your thoughts.



**1st.** Consider the question the apostles asked our Lord: "Who, thinkest Thou, is the greater in the kingdom of Heaven?" (St. Matt. xviii. 1.) In connection with this inquiry St. Chrysostom wisely observes: "See how man cannot rest content within the limits assigned him by God, but must needs ever aspire after something higher." This it is which has been the ruin of many souls, that they persist in reaching out after what is beyond the measure of their strength to attain. This spirit, the spirit of Lucifer, is largely developed in human nature. Every one wants to be the first, no one is willing to be the last. Many desire to fill a higher post instead of serving God in a lowly one; the greater part of mankind consider that they deserve to occupy a more exalted position, and very few acknowledge that they are not equal to their present post. Examine yourself; see whether you too are not to be counted among the disciples who strive for the precedence, and make every effort to rid yourself of the fatal legacy Lucifer has bequeathed to you. St. Ignatius says that if two opportunities of serving God offer themselves, the preference should always be given to the one which involves the most abjection and humiliation on our part; and St. Francis thus admonishes his monks: "Happy the Religious who when raised to a high position can truly say that he has never cherished any desire for it, and who is always willing to fill a subordinate post. Alas for him on whom his fellow Religious have conferred some dignity, and who displays reluctance to resign that dignity and become as one of the others."

**2d.** Consider the method our Lord chose of quenching the ambitious spirit of His disciples. St. Luke tells us that "He took a child and set him by Him, and said to them: 'He that is lesser among you all, he is the greater.'" (St. Luke ix. 47.) He who instead of exalting himself is humble, modest, unassuming as this child, will be great in the kingdom of Heaven. Dwell long in thought, my soul, on the pleasing example and model of humility which our Lord proposes to us in that favored boy. Yes, you must be as a child both in your intercourse with your fellow

men, and in your converse with God. Just as children, whether they are the sons of princes, or the daughters of the poorest parent, think nothing of themselves and play together in innocence, never striving for the precedence their rank entitles them to, free from the promptings of pride and ambition, so we should conduct ourselves when brought into contact with our fellow men. And furthermore our feelings, our attitude towards God, ought to resemble those of a child, who, conscious that he is entirely dependent upon his parents, submits with all docility to be led and guided by them, knowing nothing but that he owes everything to his father and mother. It is in this consciousness, this intimate conviction that without God we are nothing, that humility principally consists. We hear of a devout soul to whom God vouchsafed to make this truth apparent by means of a vision. "I seemed," she writes, "to be standing on the verge of a profound abyss. Within this abyss there were steps which led down to the bottom. These steps were however nothing but a narrow bar of iron, not more than an inch in width and thickness, all else being empty space, so that if one failed to set one's foot on the iron bar, one must infallibly fall into the abyss, since there was no railing to protect one. Our Lord then said to me: 'My daughter, descend those steps.' I would not disobey, but I knew for a certainty that I should fall down. Therefore I laid hold firmly on the hand our Lord extended to me, and began to descend. After a few steps both my feet slipped off the narrow bar. I was terribly frightened and cried out: 'Lord, hold me up!' 'What would become of thee, My daughter, if I let thee go?' 'Alas! I should be precipitated into the horrible abyss.' Then our Lord said to me: 'You now perceive that without Me you can do nothing; My help is indispensable to you to keep you from falling into the abyss every moment. Of what can you then be proud, since without Me you can do nothing?' " Meditate upon those words, my soul, that you may the more readily become a child in God's sight.

**3d.** Consider wherefore Christ gives the precedence in the kingdom of Heaven to humility, and not to charity,

although the latter is generally regarded as the first of virtues. The Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas of Aquin, explains this to us when he says that humility is the invariable accompaniment of charity, and the more humble a man is, the more fervent is his charity towards God. Let your thoughts dwell upon this true dictum, for you will find in it abundant matter for your consideration. The greater the humility, the greater the love. This we see plainly illustrated in our Seraphic Father, St. Francis. He looked upon himself as the most miserable sinner in the whole world. In his estimation every one was superior to him, and he inferior to all. And what did this humility do for him? It was the means whereby he acquired that ardent love which earned for him the name of "Seraphic Father." Humble as a little child, he at the same time glowed with a seraph's fervent love. Endeavor my soul to be, or rather to become a little child in your relation to God, unassuming, modest, humble, and you will then become a seraph, consumed by charity, inflamed with devotion both now on earth and hereafter in Heaven, where he is the greater who was the lesser here below. Let this be the goal you strive to attain, and form a resolution to-day as to the means you will employ to attain it.

## WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON OUR LORD'S WARNING AGAINST GIVING SCANDAL.

Imagine that you behold our Lord when, after the disciples' strife for precedence, He delivers an emphatic discourse upon giving scandal, to teach them to beware of it. Imagine that from His own divine lips you hear the words: "Woe to the world because of scandals. For it must needs be that scandals come; but nevertheless woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh." (St. Matt. xviii. 7.)

**1st.** Consider that scandal is the occasion of sin. **Any**

one who gives his fellow man occasion of sin, is guilty of the sin of scandal. There is a deep significance in the fact that it was immediately after the disciples had been disputing which of them should be the greater that our Lord warned them against this fault. St. Paschasius has an admirable passage on this subject: "If the apostles had continued to entertain this quarrelsome, haughty temper, they might very easily have caused the loss of the converts they had recently made, if those 'little ones,' who were still weak in faith, had seen how the apostles disputed amongst themselves for honor and precedence." Alas for Christendom! How much scandal is given, how many little ones, whose faith is feeble, are perplexed and bewildered, how much mischief is occasioned by such jealous craving for distinction, such contention for the first and foremost place, such intriguing to obtain higher dignities! How quick the people are to observe this fault in their pastors, and how hurtful it is for their souls if they do so! How many scandals in Religious Communities are due to this cause! Think over this, examine your own conduct in this respect, and make suitable resolutions.

2d. Consider the awful, appalling nature of the sentence which our Lord passes upon those who give scandal. "He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." (v. 6.) For the death of the body were a fate more preferable for him than the death of the soul, and it would not be so terrible, by far, to be cast into the depth of the sea, as to be precipitated into the abyss of hell. This spiritual death, this casting into hell, is the lot awarded to him who gives scandal, and sad to say, also to a large proportion of those who are scandalized by him, whom he leads to commit sin. Recall to mind, my soul, all that our Lord did and suffered to save souls; think of the shedding of blood, the cruel wounds, the agony and grief which the redemption of one single soul cost Him, and you will then form a just conception of the heinous guilt of those who by giving scandal cause the death of one

such soul. They are the confederates, the servants, the tools of the devil, of him who was a murderer from the beginning; hence the awful condemnation our Lord passes on them.

Ask yourself my soul, ere you proceed further, if you have never scandalized one of your Brethren, your Sisters? Do not be too easy with yourself, and carefully avoid giving offence to the weak. The Apostle says: "If meat scandalize my brother, I will never eat flesh, lest I scandalize my brother." (I. Cor. viii. 13.) Do you imitate him in this respect?

3d. Consider our Lord's concluding words: "See that you despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you that their angels in Heaven always see the face of My Father who is in Heaven." (v. 10.) Thus, as St. Chrysostom bids us observe, not only must we not scandalize the little ones, not only must we not treat them slightly, but they are to be highly honored, because the Lord loves them and by the medium of His angels constitutes Himself their protector. No one, be he ever so lowly, ever so destitute, ever so poorly endowed with bodily or mental gifts, are we warranted in despising and treating with contempt, or we shall give offence to his angel. Impress this truth upon your mind; your fellow man, on whom perhaps you look with a scornful eye, has an angel, one of the princes of Heaven given to him by God, to be his guardian, his companion throughout his earthly course. The remembrance of this will surely make you avoid those contemptuous thoughts, depreciating judgments and slighting behavior, by which you have frequently given offence to your Brother, and at the same time displeased God and the holy angels. On one occasion one of the Friars Minor was heard to say of an insolent mendicant: "Judging by externals, one would take that man for a poor, abject creature, but if one could look into his heart, it would perhaps be seen that he was the proudest, most luxury-loving individual in the country round." St. Francis sharply rebuked the speaker. "My son," he said, "thou hast spoken against a poor man, and what is more, thou

hast insulted Christ, who presents Himself to us in the person of the poor." How often, my soul, do you think that this holy Father might have addressed that reproof to you?

## THURSDAY AFTER THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON FRATERNAL CORRECTION.

After our Lord had instructed His disciples concerning the avoidance of scandal, He proceeds to exhort them in the most emphatic manner to correct one another in a spirit of fraternal charity. Thus it will be seen that not only are Christ's disciples in duty bound not to be an occasion of sin to others, but if through no fault of theirs their Brother has fallen into sin, they ought to endeavor to set him right. Represent to yourself our Lord, speaking on this subject to His apostles, and listen to His words.

**1st.** "If thy brother shall offend against thee, go, and rebuke him between thee and him alone." (St. Matt. xviii. 15.) This is truly a heavenly doctrine, for by following it man is made like to God. For as God seeks to rescue the soul that has gone astray although that soul has offended against Him, the almighty and most high God, so we, supposing that some one has deeply wronged and sinned against us, and thus incurred the risk of eternal perdition, ought to forget our own grievance and only think how we can save our brother. Our Lord says: "go"; therefore we are not to wait until the delinquent himself comes to us, for, as St. Chrysostom remarks, he may perhaps be so enslaved by anger or overcome by timidity as to be unable to acknowledge himself at fault. Therefore go to him and administer the medicine of fraternal reproof; but let the two feet of compassion and charity carry you to him. Do not seek to correct him with proud,

vindictive, angry or contemptuous words, but have pity on his frailty. Regard him as a soul purchased with the precious blood of Christ and love him as such; do not rebuke him in public, but "between thee and him alone," for, as St. Ambrose says, a kindly correction does far more good than a harsh accusation. The first awakens a salutary confession, the latter only embitters and does harm. Oh how much mischief would be avoided, how much good would be effected, how many souls would be won if all Christians and above all every Religious were to act in accordance with our Lord's admonition and the wise maxims of His saints! Consider what has been said, my soul, and form your resolutions accordingly.

**2d.** Consider the conduct our Lord further enjoins on us: "If he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may stand. And if he will not hear them, tell the Church." (v. 16, 17.) It is the voice of the Good Shepherd that speaks. If he cannot bring back the wandering sheep of himself alone, the Christian is told to call upon others for assistance, and take no rest until his object is attained. Lay this to heart, my soul. If your erring Brother will not listen to you, do not give him up because of it; perhaps he will pay more attention to others, to persons whom he considers wiser, more pious and more impartial than you are; do not hesitate humbly to ask them to mediate for you with him. Very often this means is successful in restoring peace and effecting a reconciliation. And if this too is fruitless, then "tell the Church," that is to say lay the matter before the proper authorities in a charitable and humble spirit. The neglect of our Lord's precept in this respect occasions great injury to soul and body, and causes much mischief in Communities and convents. Mistaken kindness often prompts the offended to spare the offender's feelings, and thus he injures his own Mother, the Church, the Community, the Order to which he belongs, without really benefiting his Brother by such unwise leniency. Ought not the welfare of the Mother be thought of before the feelings of Brethren and

Sisters? Why then do you disregard the former (in weighty matters, be it understood) and pay no heed to the counsel of St. Augustine? "Do not imagine," he says, "that it shows malevolence on your part to speak of your Brother's fault. On the contrary, you will be as much to blame as he is, if, when you might have led him to amend by making his fault known, by your silence you cause the loss of his soul. For if your Brother had a wound on his body, which he persisted in concealing from dread of the surgeon's knife, would it not be cruelty to say nothing about it, and real kindness to call in medical advice? How much the more is it your duty to disclose the spiritual sore, lest it eat into the heart, and mortification should ensue?"

**3d.** Consider how, in conformity with our Lord's exhortation, you ought to listen willingly to any one who administers to you a fraternal reprimand, and pay heed to him as to a true follower of Jesus Christ. He complies in your regard with the injunction our Lord Himself laid on us, and to resent his reproof would be to rebel against our Lord. To repel his correction brusquely would be tantamount to shutting the door in your benefactor's face. Plutarch, the sage of antiquity, says the enemy who will speak the truth to us should be purchased with gold. Solomon in his book of Proverbs tells us: "Better are the wounds of a friend than the deceitful kisses of an enemy" (xxvii. 6); and again, the Holy Spirit speaking through the lips of the Wise Man, says: "He that hateth reproof is foolish." (Prov. xii. 1.) We may go further; not only is he a fool, but the man who cannot endure to hear the truth about himself is both haughty and conceited. Do you belong to this class? How do you behave when the Superior censures your conduct, when a Brother rebukes you, or a Sister tells you of your fault? Ask yourself this question, and then ponder well those words of St. Francis Borgia: There are two evils which ensue from want of patience in taking a reproof given in fraternal charity. Either those who are so obstinate are left to themselves, and then their faults grow and strike deep root, or the



whole house is soon filled with gall and bitterness, for such individuals take as a wrong what they ought to consider as a favor, and turning all the means of grace into poison, they view that as an insult for which they ought to be eternally grateful. Meditate upon these two evils, and perhaps you will then learn to take a brotherly correction in the right spirit.

## FRIDAY AFTER THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST.

Fix your eyes upon Jesus as He hangs upon the cross. A preternatural and awful darkness overspreads the earth; fear and dread seize upon both the Crucified and His crucifiers; profound silence prevails. No sound breaks the stillness save the moans of the Divine Victim whose precious blood trickles down the stem of the cross and falls in large drops to the ground. O precious fount of grace, flowing from the cross! Keep this solemn scene before your mind during your meditation.

**1st.** Consider that for our Lord Himself this sacred blood is most precious. At the cost of intense suffering this source of grace was opened to us by the Redeemer. This fount of grace, the precious blood of Christ, was unlocked to mankind on the Mount of Olives, by nothing less than a fearful agony, the agony of death, when amid terrible sufferings the healing stream, the blood of Jesus, was forced out of the pores of His sacred body. More copiously, but at the cost of still greater agony, did this life-giving stream flow forth during the cruel scourging and crowning with thorns; on the cross it poured out of the wounds torn by the iron nails that transfixed His hands and feet, and to wind up all, the last few drops were drained out of the lifeless body by the lance wherewith the Roman soldier pierced His side. Amid no scant meas-

ure of pain, of tears, of suffering, does this fount of grace take its rise. We speak of the blood of Christ as precious; precious it truly is, for what did it not cost the Saviour till that last drop was shed, what sorrow and suffering, what apprehension and anguish! Nay, it cost Him His life. See what it cost Jesus to save you, and ask yourself at what expense do you put yourself to prove your gratitude for the salvation He purchased for you at so high a price?

**2d.** Consider that this blood is also precious for the world; how abundant and how great are the graces the world receives through the blood of Christ! That precious fount of grace, springing forth from the cross, does not dry up at the foot of the cross, it continues to flow, it will not cease to flow while time lasts. At the Last Supper, on the day preceding His crucifixion, our Lord created, so to speak, a store house wherein the blood that flowed from the cross should be received, and whence it should stream forth upon individual souls. In the adorable Sacrament of the Altar the blood of Jesus is ever poured out afresh; that sacrament is a living, an unfailing spring, a source of grace from which all mankind may at all times draw. From it the unhappy sinner may draw forgiveness, the afflicted consolation, the weak strength; in it the sick may find a cure, the just the graces they need, devout souls their purest joy. That blood cries day and night to Heaven, not for vengeance as did the blood of Abel, but for pardon. That blood, as a deluge, overspreads the earth, but the waters of this flood, unlike that of Noe's day, bring life, not destruction to the world. That blood is a red sea, into which thousands plunge, not to be swallowed up as the Egyptians were, but to pass over with the Israelites in safety to the land of promise. Meditate, my soul, on the virtues of this stream, this source of grace, fathom its depths, and let your heart overflow with wonder and admiration, with gratitude and compunction.

**3d.** Consider how precious the blood of Christ is for you, how highly you ought to prize it. What do you not owe to this fount of grace? In it you were born again in baptism to a new life, by it you have been cleansed again and

again in the Sacrament of Penance. How often you have drunk from this fountain in Holy Communion; daily, in celebrating holy Mass, if you are a Priest. This precious blood is indeed precious for you beyond all price; it is your greatest treasure, your chief riches. Who can compute the number of graces you owe to it? For it is to be hoped that you can make your own these words from the Imitation of Christ: "Who, approaching humbly to the fountain of sweetness, does not carry away thence some little sweetness? Or who standing near a great fire, does not receive from it some little heat? And Thou art a fountain always full and overflowing; a fire always burning and never failing." If the blood of Christ is in very deed so invaluable for your welfare, it ought to be precious to you; that is to say, it ought to be dear and sacred to you above all else, there ought to be nothing in the whole world which you compare with it, you ought to value it more than all that earth can offer. Is this so? If it were so, should you ever tread it under foot by your own sins, should you in your capacity of Priest, of Superior, of Confessor, allow others to trample upon it through your negligence, through your thoughtlessness? Alas! this fount of grace was not created by Jesus without bitter sufferings, and do you imagine that while it flows continually in the sacraments, it costs Him no less suffering on account of the ingratitude, the malice, the wickedness of mankind? Are you acquainted with some one who thus grieves His loving Heart?

## SATURDAY AFTER THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE PARTICULAR JUDGMENT.

Another week is now drawing to its close. How swiftly the days pass, how soon the last day will come for you! Place before your mind the solemn, the awful moment when you will heave your last sigh, when your heart will give its last throb, when your eyes will close for ever on earth. Unhappy soul, what will then be your feelings? You will be compelled to quit the body, to leave the world, to appear before the judgment-seat of a strict Judge. Realize in as far as you can that awful moment, and then proceed to consider the following points.

**1st.** The soul has quitted her earthly tenement in which she dwelt at ease. She has left everything, and everything has left her. She stands trembling on the threshold of eternity, lonely and friendless. She must cross the terrible abyss of death, she must stand before the tribunal of God, positively, completely alone. Imagine a mariner, turned afloat on an unknown, shoreless ocean, with only a narrow plank to cling to; imagine a traveller, wandering alone in the midst of an unknown, trackless desert; what a desolate, forsaken condition! How forlorn, how perilous a lot! Very similar is the condition of the soul at the moment of which we speak. How plainly will she then see the vanity, the futility of much that while on earth she greatly prized; the vanity of earthly friendships, of earthly relationships; the vanity of worldly possessions, of worldly dignities, of worldly renown. What do all these profit the poor soul now in her terrible loneliness and abandonment?

**2d.** Consider the next moment, one still more solemn for the disembodied spirit. She is not long left alone, quite alone. In some cases this solitude, terrible as it ap-

pears, might seem happiness to the soul in view of what follows upon it; for see, she is summoned to appear before God, to stand before His judgment-seat. What a moment is this! The soul is alone in the presence of God. To His searching eye her whole interior is manifest. His glance penetrates to the inmost recesses of the heart, no thought is hidden from Him, no act is unknown to Him. The soul stands before Him alone, naked and ashamed; she cannot excuse herself or justify herself, she can only keep silence. Think of the awfulness of this situation, my soul, in which you will find yourself when you stand before your God; perhaps you will experience a secret terror, perhaps a cold shudder will run over you, and when you turn from this meditation,—as one awaking from an unpleasant dream—it will be with a feeling of relief that you are not actually in the presence of your Judge. And perhaps the feeling of terror and alarm wherewith the contemplation of the judgment inspired you may not be without result, and when you in reality stand before the dread tribunal, you may have less cause for fear and apprehension.

**3d.** Consider, after you have, in as far as is possible, realized the position in which the soul finds herself after death, what would be the sentence passed on you, if you were at this very moment standing before the judgment-seat of God? It might be one of three. Either Heaven with its joys, its infinite felicity and everlasting delight; or purgatory with—mark this well—appalling tortures it may be, and awful sufferings, sufferings to which those of earth cannot be compared; or perhaps hell, with its eternal darkness and never-ending torment. O momentous verdict, on which so infinitely much depends! My soul, it is yet within your power to determine which of these three shall be your destiny. Suppose that the all-merciful God has given you a respite, and reflect what use you will make of it. Each night, before you lay down to rest, recall to mind the terrible moment which has formed the subject of our meditation to-day. There is no thought more salutary than the thought of the judgment to come; it will

deter you from sin, it will induce you to practise virtue, it will make temporal tribulations appear light, and preserve you from coveting empty honors. Wherefore to-day take a twofold resolution; resolve frequently, and particularly at the close of every week, to let your thoughts dwell upon the judgment awaiting you. In order that you may not be put to confusion in that day, judge yourself minutely and strictly when you make your daily examination of conscience, and go frequently to confession.

## THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE RAISING OF THE WIDOW'S SON AT NAIM.

Represent to yourself the pathetic scene set before you in to-day's Gospel. A mournful funeral procession is passing through the streets of Naim. Weeping bitterly the bereaved mother follows to its last resting-place the remains of her only son. A multitude of people, desirous to manifest their sympathy, but unable to render assistance or relief, accompany the bier. Just as the city gates are reached, Jesus enters, the great Worker of miracles, ready to afford succor when it seems impossible. Keep this scene before your mind during your meditation.

**1st.** Contemplate the dead man. The corpse is not that of an old man, nor of one who was wasted away by a long illness, it is that of a young man in his bloom, in the prime of life. Furthermore this youth is not one of a number of sons, he is not the scion of a wealthy house, richly endowed with this world's goods and in other respects happy and prosperous; he is the only son of a poor widow, her sole support, her only treasure, in a word her all. See how ruthless death is. He has no pity on the infant in the cradle, hungry, crying for its mother. He carries off the mother and leaves the child to spend its little strength in fruitless wailing. He is not touched by the lamentations of the unhappy orphans, he takes their

father from them, and anon he relentlessly plucks a fairer flower, the maiden, the youth growing up to man's estate in the heyday of health and strength, to the infinite grief of the sorrowing parents. Reflect upon the cruelty of death, call to mind the distress and grief, the pain and tears that he causes in the world, not in order that these thoughts may have the effect of rendering you gloomy and sad, but that you may the rather rejoice, and congratulate yourself on this, that for you, as a Priest, a Religious, death no longer has this sting. He can rob you of nothing, since you possess nothing; he cannot take from you property to which your heart clings, nor relatives, for you parted from them long ago; nor life itself, for that is consecrated to God. How happy you are, my soul, in contrast to the children of the world! Yet perhaps you do not entertain these feelings in regard to death—if it is so, then be assured that you are as yet no true Priest or Religious.

2d. Contemplate the mother of the dead man, as she follows the body of her son to the grave, almost beside herself with grief and sorrow, dissolved in tears, overwhelmed with pain and affliction. How keenly she feels the loss, the great, the irreparable loss she has sustained! Jesus sees her trouble and is "moved with mercy." (St. Luke vii. 13.) This mother is a type of our dear and faithful Mother, the Church. How bitterly she bewails the spiritual death of her children, for she knows the extent of the loss involved in such a death, the loss of an immortal soul, of a member of the Saviour's body, of a soul redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. Accordingly she sends up her sighs to Heaven day and night, in order to move Jesus to show mercy to unhappy sinners. Many a transgressor owes his conversion to the penitential tears and prayers, to the sacrifices of his Mother the Church, which have been the means of raising him from the dead. You also are a member of this same Church, my soul. Show yourself worthy of such a mother. Take part in her sorrow, her tears, her compassionate supplications on behalf of those who are spiritually dead, unrepentant sin-

ners. Nothing is more admirable in a Priest or the member of a Religious Order than this compassion with the sinner. St. Francis once said to his monks: "Go and seek out thieves, who albeit they are thieves, are yet our brethren; set before them the best bread that you have, invite them to dine with you in the kindest manner, and I hope by God's grace you may win their souls." Ask yourself how many souls you have gained by mercy, how many have you repulsed by pride and severity?

**3d.** Contemplate Him who raised the dead. The first words He utters are addressed to the widow: "Weep not." Only omnipotent love can speak in this wise, says St. Gregory of Nyssa; only the love that can change mourning into joy, and death into life. How often since then has He performed this miracle! Whenever a sinner is absolved from his guilt, Jesus stays the sorrowing tears which the sinner himself has shed, or which others have shed on his account; and the sadness that filled his soul and the heart of his pious friends, the sadness he caused to the Church, to his Angel Guardian, is changed into gladness. Remember this, you who are a Priest, if you are tempted to grow impatient in the confessional. "He came near," the Evangelist tells us, "and touched the bier. And they that carried it stood still. And He said, Young man, I say to thee arise. And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And He gave him to his mother." (v. 14, 15.) Here we have the whole process of conversion. The Redeemer first of all touches the bier with His grace—the bier signifies the habit of sin—and the bearers stand still, the transgressor at last stops in his course of sin. By the lips of His Priest our Lord then speaks the word: Arise; He calls the dead man back to life by means of the Sacrament of Penance, and then, as St. Albert says, gives the child newly re-awakened to the life of grace back to the Church, his Mother. Now when you consider all this, when you think how often our Lord has wrought and still works this miracle in you and thousands of other Christians, have you not reason to glorify God as did the people of Naim, and with a grateful heart to laud and magnify Jesus, who



raised you from spiritual death? Yes, give thanks to God with your whole heart for your conversion and that of your brother, and resolve during the week on which we have entered to show your thankfulness by daily performing some act of devotion and penance on behalf of unhappy sinners.

## MONDAY AFTER THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE ACCUSATION OF THE ADULTERESS.

Look upon the picture which the Evangelist St. John here sketches for us. See the Jews, feigning righteous indignation, in reality planning how they may ruin our Lord, standing around Him, having placed in their midst a woman whom they have brought before Him to be accused of a grievous sin. Having been caught in the very act, she trembles, conscious of her guilt and its penalty. "Master," they say to Jesus, "Moses in the law commanded us to stone such an one. But what sayest Thou?" (St. John viii. 5.) Keep this scene before your mind while you meditate on the following points:

**1st.** "But Jesus bowed Himself down." (v. 6.) Observe in this, St. Ambrose remarks, the divine reserve and the goodness of Christ. When the accusation is brought against the woman, He stoops His head to the ground, to indicate His wish to avoid all occasions of judging and punishing, nay, by hiding His countenance He appears desirous to manifest His reluctance, the shame He feels at being chosen to act as Judge, to pass sentence on a culprit, seeing that He came to show mercy unto all men. Jesus bowed down, St. Antony of Padua says, to indicate that those who are in authority ought not to be too prompt to listen to every charge, still less to take delight in hearing of the transgressions of their subjects; that they ought not instantly to think what penalty is to be inflicted, but

should take everything into consideration, and maturely deliberate upon the nature of the offence, as well as on the person of the accused, of his accusers and the witnesses. Alas! how often we act in a way opposed to these wise counsels! How ready we are to judge, to punish, to censure, and evince pleasure rather than displeasure at having to do so. Here you have abundant reason to bow down, my soul, in penitence and confusion, but this time on account of your own fault, not that of another.

**2d.** "He wrote with His finger upon the ground." According to the interpretation given by St. Bonaventure, the characters thus traced possessed a mysterious virtue, so that each of the accusers read in them his own sin. St. Jerome also says that our Lord wrote the names of those insolent individuals, and beside them the names of the persons they had seduced. Here are two points for your consideration, the awful nature of the divine omniscience, and the merciful leniency of God. Nothing is unknown to Him, nothing is hidden from Him. All your thoughts, your words, your actions are as if inscribed before His eyes. If therefore you are inclined to accuse your Brother of a fault, pause and call to mind Jesus writing on the ground; remember that all you have done has been inscribed by Him long since. On the other hand this mysterious writing manifests the merciful leniency of our Lord. To pretend to write is an accepted sign amongst the Jews that one wishes an unpleasant subject not to be noticed or discussed. Now as Jesus knew that the accusation, prompted as it was solely by a bad motive, would redound to the disgrace of those who brought it and increase their guilt, He desired to give them time to escape out of the snare they had laid for themselves, and elude the condemnatory verdict of the Judge. Learn from this, my soul, the value of Christian discretion and tact, which knows how to give others to understand, when occasion requires, that one wishes to appear as if one had not seen or heard what has passed. It may often be the means of effecting much good, and averting much that is undesirable, if an erring Brother is allowed time to come to a sense

of his own fault, to acknowledge himself in the wrong, and enter upon a course of amendment.

3d. "As the Jews continued asking Him, our Lord lifted up Himself, and said to them: He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." (v. 7.) The hardened sinners would not take the hint given them out of kindness, they persisted in demanding a definite decision, and it was given them in the foregoing answer, an answer, St. Augustine exclaims, truly worthy of divine wisdom. How adroitly Jesus leads these accusers to the knowledge of themselves. Their design was to bring public disgrace on the woman; it never occurred to them to look into their own heart. Their eyes are fixed on the adulteress, on themselves they do not so much as glance. Had they done this, they assuredly would not have turned their attention to her, as our Lord gave them plainly to understand. Furthermore: Moses had indeed commanded (thus St. Cyril of Alexandria explains our Lord's words) that one guilty of adultery should be stoned, but this penalty was to be inflicted by those who kept the law, not by those who violated it. In the same manner we hear our Lord say: I do not forbid the stoning of the adulteress, but I will not have it done by men who themselves have transgressed the law not less, but more grievously. Reflect my soul, upon this verdict our Lord pronounces, a verdict equally wise and just. See that you, when you are called upon to pass judgment on any one, follow His example and first bow yourself down, that is carefully and deliberately weigh the matter; and in many cases write upon the ground, that is, leave the sinner time to amend. Learn also from our Lord's answer to beware how you judge and condemn your neighbor. It behooves us first to amend our own actions before we endeavor to amend those of others. Begin with yourself, St. Gregory wisely counsels us; the right thing is first to judge ourselves, to punish our own sin, before we take up a stone to cast at our neighbor.

## TUESDAY AFTER THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE PARDON OF THE ADULTERESS.

Behold the miserable, sinful woman as she stands before our Lord. On the one hand she is overwhelmed with fear, contrition and shame on account of her sin; on the other she trembles in suspense as to the nature of the verdict her Judge will pronounce. It may be a sentence of death, yet the words our Lord spoke allow her to entertain the hope that she may possibly be pardoned. Endeavor to enter into the feelings of this woman whilst you meditate on the subject.

1st. "And again stooping down, He wrote on the ground" (St. John viii. 8), the Evangelist tells us. "After the Lord," we quote St. Augustine's words, "had with infinite gravity and majesty discharged the arrow of justice that went to the heart of the audacious accusers, He averted His eyes from His discomfited adversaries, and most considerately left them time to retire quietly from the scene of their defeat." In this we see, my soul, the greatness, the holiness of the Redeemer. The interests of justice are His only concern. After He has satisfied the demands of justice by the sentence He pronounces, He pays no more heed to the delinquents; He does not take pleasure in noting their confusion, He does not make it difficult for them to withdraw; on the contrary He facilitates it, and spares them to the utmost. Learn of Him what ought to be your conduct when charity or justice compels you to censure, to reprimand, to punish. When this duty has been fulfilled, then let the erring Brother and Sister no longer feel the weight of disgrace; do not remind them of their fault, do not render penance difficult and bitter to them, but spare them, show kind consideration for them, as

Jesus did to the Pharisees. Act thus, and you will thereby win the heart of the sinner, you will convince him that a sense of duty, not personal motives urged you to administer that rebuke and chastisement. Has such been your conduct?

2d. "Jesus alone remained, and the woman standing in the midst." (v. 9.) In commenting on this passage St. Augustine beautifully remarks: "Two remained behind, incarnate misery and incarnate mercy. The poor woman stood there terrified, expecting that she would receive her punishment at the hands of Him who was alone without sin. But He, who had driven away His opponents with the word of justice looks upon her with tender clemency." Consider our Lord's conduct, my soul, lay it well to heart; reflect upon St. Augustine's saying: "Two remained behind, incarnate misery and incarnate mercy." Truly there is no greater misery than sin, no greater mercy than that of our God. For when the world, when those who are supposed to be better than the ordinary run of mankind, take up stones to cast at the unhappy sinner, than whom they are in reality no less sinful, the transgressor in his misery meets with mercy from Him who alone possesses the right to punish him. But be it observed, the sinner must not fly from the presence of that merciful God, like the Jews, who went out one by one; on the contrary he must draw nigh to Him, acknowledging and confessing his guilt in a spirit of true contrition, and remain standing before Jesus as did the woman in the Gospel. For, as St. Ambrose teaches, shamefaced confession is most profitable to us, and by it the punishment due to us is mitigated. Why is it then, my soul, that you find it so difficult—not indeed to sin as the woman did, but like her, to remain standing before Jesus or His representative upon earth, the Priest, the Superior, and openly and penitently confess your fault? Are you not too apt to prefer to slip away quietly like the Jews, in order to avoid this salutary humiliation? Say, will you who are a Priest, a Religious, from henceforth allow yourself to be surpassed in this respect by a woman taken in adultery?

3d. "Then Jesus said: Neither will I condemn thee. Go and now sin no more." (v. 11.) How is this, O Lord, St. Augustine exclaims, dost Thou favor the sinners? By no means. Listen to what follows: "Go and now sin no more." Thus our Lord condemned the sin, not the sinner. He only enjoins, St. Cyril says, upon the woman whom He pardons, to abstain from sinning for the future, for relapse is much more dangerous than the first fall into sin, and brings one much nearer to the verge of perdition; a second fall will often prove fatal to the soul which the first fall has not irretrievably ruined. Meditate upon these two sayings of the great Fathers of the Church. Learn, in accordance with St. Augustine's admonition, to condemn the sin, and save the sinner; to hate the crime and love the criminal; and in compliance with the teaching of St. Cyril and the words of our Lord Himself beware yourself of relapse into the sin which you censure in others. At the time when you most harshly and severely judge the sinner—not the sin—you are yourself in the greatest danger of falling into the very sin for which you blame him; and when through God's mercy you are absolved from the sin which you observe in others, you have most reason of all, instead of condemning your neighbor, to be yourself on your guard, for perhaps in his case it is the first time of falling, whereas were you again to be guilty of the same it would be a relapse into sin, a fall of a far more perilous character.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY  
AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE HEALING OF THE MAN WHO WAS BLIND FROM HIS  
BIRTH.

Represent to yourself the pitiable condition of the man who was born blind, and who sat by the wayside and begged. Perpetual night, continual darkness, obscurity unrelieved by a ray of light, such is the melancholy lot of this unhappy man. He cannot rejoice in the radiance of the sun, or look with delight on the azure sky, the verdant earth. For him the whole world is a dark and dreary desert. When you have realized to some extent this sad condition, proceed to consider the mystic interpretation of the narrative before you.

1st. Consider the singular question the disciples asked our Lord: "Rabbi, who hath sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?" (St. John ix. 2.) Hence we see that the apostles attributed the deplorable condition of the blind man to his sin or his parents' sin. Alas! were sin the cause of such misfortunes, would you not have abundant reason for astonishment that you are still in possession of sight and hearing, that you have the free use of your tongue, since you have so frequently put these senses to a sinful use? No, our Lord answers: "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." (v. 3.) What an inspiring, what a consoling answer! Thus all the misery and misfortune, the distress and suffering which weigh upon man here below, are not the chastisement of sin exclusively, but oftentimes ordained for the greater honor and glory of God. Always think of this latter cause when you contemplate the trials of others, but in your own case think of both the one and the other. For the con-

viction: my sins have deserved this suffering, for their sake it has come upon me, is most salutary for your soul; and the remembrance that it was thus ordained that the works of God should be made manifest, contains in itself a rich fund of consolation. Is it not comforting to think: this is God's doing, it is by the dispensation of His providence that this suffering, this sickness has come upon me; and is it not encouraging to know: by accepting this affliction patiently, submissively, cheerfully, I can make manifest the works of God, that is, show forth the power of faith, the might of His grace; show them forth to the glory of God and the edification of my neighbor. Think well upon this truth, it will afford no slight solace both for yourself and for others.

2d. Consider the manner in which our Lord healed the man who was blind from his birth. "He spat upon the ground and made clay of the spittle and spread the clay upon his eyes, and said to him: Go to the pool of Siloe and wash. He went therefore and washed and came back seeing." (v. 6, 7.) This man who was born blind represents our poor humanity, the unhappy race of Adam's children, who since their first parents' fall are born blind, spiritually blind, "wholly born in sins" (v. 34), so that they can no longer discern what is right and just, and grope in the darkness of unbelief and moral corruption. How is their cure effected? By means of clay and spittle. By the clay, human nothingness is signified, for man was made out of the dust of the earth, and by the spittle, which comes from the mouth, divine wisdom is signified; the clay made with the spittle is Incarnate Wisdom, stooping to man's abasement, awakening in the soul, according to St. Gregory's interpretation, a consciousness of her own frailty, degradation and spiritual blindness. This consciousness makes it easier to go to the pool of Siloe, it urges the blind man to wash himself in the waters of penance. He goes thither blind, but with the clay and spittle spread upon his eyes; that is, he is conscious of his sinfulness, he is contrite for his sins, and he comes back seeing. Meditate, my soul, upon the mystic meaning of this mira-



cle, and ask yourself how often have not you resembled that man blind from his birth both in his infirmity and in its cure, and how seldom have you resembled him in his gratitude for the wondrous cure wrought once on him, and in you a countless number of times.

**3d.** Consider how after the healing of the man who was born blind there was a commotion among the people, for as the Evangelist tells us: "The neighbors and they that had seen him before, that he was a beggar, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said: 'This is he. But others said: No, but he is like him.'" (v. 8, 9.) Here again, my soul, you will find plentiful matter for meditation. The people cannot, will not, believe that this man, walking alone, joyously, with full use of his sight, is the same whom they had so long seen sitting by the wayside, a blind, wretched mendicant. Thus it ought to be with you. If your fellow men, your Brethren and Sisters, formerly knew you as a beggar, poor in virtue, spiritually blind, a slave to pride, to envy, to the craving for enjoyment, let them now, after your conversion, ask in astonishment: Can this be he who but yesterday was so careless, so proud, so frivolous? How is it that he is now so zealous, so humble, so serious? Is it really the same individual? That, my soul, would prove your conversion to be real and thorough; and had you changed so completely, oh then all your former sins would not only be a continual source of grief to you, they would rather enhance your merit by the good influence which your conversion would have upon your neighbor. They would in a certain sense, tend to your credit, just as a rent in the garment of a rich man may render that garment more beautiful and valuable, because of the elegant gold embroidery which is laid upon it for the purpose of concealing the rent.

## THURSDAY AFTER THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE HIRELING AND THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

Set before you the image of the good shepherd, who watches over his flock with vigilance and love. He leads them to the best pastures, goes after the wandering sheep until he finds it, takes the tired lamb upon his shoulders and carries it to the fold. Such a shepherd is Jesus Christ, loving, careful, anxious for the welfare of His sheep. He says so Himself. Listen and meditate upon His words as recorded by St. John.

**1st.** "I am the Good Shepherd." (St. John x. 11.) According to St. Jerome the signs of a good shepherd are these: He clothes himself with a sheepskin, that the sheep may follow him. Besides this, he has a shepherd's pouch, a staff and a horn. Now as Jesus is a shepherd, the Good Shepherd of men, He clothed Himself with the apparel of His sheep, He took on Himself our human nature, in order that we, His sheep, might follow Him more willingly. He also has a shepherd's pouch, wherein are provisions for the sustenance of His flock, the holy sacraments He instituted; He also has a staff, wherewith to drive away the wolf, the evil enemy of His sheep, the devil, and that staff is His holy cross. Finally He has also a shepherd's horn, that by its sound He may call together the lost and straying sheep and bring them back to Him, a pipe whose dulcet notes attract the flock and induce them to follow Him, and that is His sacred doctrine. Our Lord Himself points out another characteristic of the Good Shepherd: "The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." (v. 11.) Not only did He give His life for us by the death He suffered for our sakes, He did more; He gave us His life under the form of food, and by means of this

He gives life to His sheep, gives His life "that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly"; that is, a life not for time only but one which passes over into a life of bliss that lasts to all eternity. Meditate, my soul, on these distinctive qualities of the Good Shepherd, behold their excellence, pray fervently, imploringly that all His sheep may follow Him, that the wandering sheep may return to Him; and ask yourself seriously whether you belong to the number of those sheep of whom our Lord says: "I know Mine and Mine know Me." (v. 14.)

**2d.** Consider the contrast which the hireling presents to the Good Shepherd, in the description here given of him: "But the hireling, and he that is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep, and flieth; and the wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep." (v. 12.) What a dreary, forbidding picture is here presented, in comparison with that of the Good Shepherd. St. Gregory says that the hireling is not concerned for the welfare of his flock, but for his own profit. Unfaithful hirelings, St. Augustine bids us observe, see the injury that is being done to a soul, but for the sake of their own temporal interests, they do not interfere to correct it. They see a man going headlong to eternal perdition, they see the wolf of hell laying in wait for him, they see all this, yet they do not cry out, they do not rebuke or punish, they flee. If only they can have the milk, the wool, the flesh of their sheep they do not trouble themselves further about them. What miserable, contemptible creatures! It is to them that St. Boniface referred when he spoke so severely, saying: "If one who is commissioned to feed the sheep of Christ's flock, leads a godly life as far as his own person is concerned, but from diffidence or timidity shrinks from rebuking sinners, he will suffer the same damnation as those who have lost their souls through his culpable silence. What will it then profit thee to have corrected thine own faults, if thou art punished for the sins of others?" Wherefore do not be dissatisfied, but give thanks to God, if you are not placed over others as their pastor, but only have to follow as a

simple sheep whither you are led. Instead of envying your pastors their position, pity them, pray for them, that they may not be lost on account of the misdeeds of their flock.

**3d.** Consider that it is the bounden duty of every one, without exception, to be a good shepherd. The Superior has this duty towards his underlings, the parish Priest towards his flock, the Confessor towards his penitents, the teacher towards his pupils, the master of a house towards his family, and finally every man towards his fellow men and towards his own soul. How do you fulfil this pastoral duty? Are you a good shepherd or a hireling? Do you leave your own soul or the souls entrusted to your charge to suffer hunger? To what pastures do you lead them? To those where the herbage is good or where poisonous plants abound. What do you do when the wolf approaches, when temptation comes, when occasion for sin presents itself, when danger threatens, when disorder prevails? Ask yourself these questions to-day, for perhaps these are the very points concerning which you seldom examine your conscience. Since it is your duty to follow Christ, follow Him pre-eminently in His office of Good Shepherd, imitate Him in the love you cherish for your own immortal soul and the souls of your fellow men. Of this that eminent servant of Christ, St. Francis, offered a beautiful instance. "Nothing," he was wont to say, "is to be preferred to the salvation of souls, because for them the Son of God vouchsafed to be nailed to the cross." For this object he labored, he struggled, he prayed day and night; for the salvation of souls he chastised and tortured his frail body; and when begged to moderate his excessive zeal, he would reply: "I am sent to give you an example, and had I not sufficient charity to perform this duty, I should do little good to others and gain nothing myself, even if I spoke with the tongue of men and of angels." That is what a saint says. Ask yourself, my soul, what your conduct is when your duty as a shepherd calls you to labor for the sanctification of your own soul or the souls of others.

FRIDAY AFTER THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY  
AFTER PENTECOST.

ON OUR LORD'S PAINFUL PASSAGE FROM THE MOUNT OF  
OLIVES TO THE HOUSE OF ANNAS.

It is night. A band of executioners and soldiers, issuing from the Garden of Olives, with Jesus in their midst, wend their way by the light of torches through the gloomy vale of Cedron. Unseen by man, a number of angels accompany that melancholy procession; angels who compassionate the Redeemer, now under arrest, and grieve over the ingratitude of men who treat their Creator, their Redeemer, like a captured criminal. The powers of hell on the other hand are triumphant, and incite the executioners to the practice of yet greater cruelty. Keep this sad procession, the saddest which the world has witnessed for thousands of years, before your eyes during the time of your meditation.

**1st.** Consider what a painful way this was for our Lord. Before He had recovered from the utter prostration and frightful exhaustion consequent upon the terrible conflict of His soul upon Gethsemane, the awful anguish and bloody sweat upon Mount Olivet, He is hurried away by the executioners and dragged by them as a lamb to the slaughter. The servants of the high priest vent all their malice and ill-will on their unhappy prisoner; they drag Him, following them with bare feet along the rough, uneven path, over stones and through mud; they drag Him first one way, then another, paying no heed to His bleeding feet, His deadly exhaustion, His frequent falls; nay, when they come to the bridge over the brook Cedron, the malignant wretches actually push Him over, so that He falls, striking Himself on the stony bed of the running stream (as was revealed to a devout soul in a vision), and

it is only with difficulty that His parched lips can obtain a draught of the scanty waters of the rivulet, as the prophet predicted: "He shall drink of the torrent in the way." (Ps. cix. 7.) Like a warrior who, quitting for a moment the battle fray, stoops over the wayside brook to cool his fevered lips amid the heat and stress of the fight, so the heavenly warrior, the divine combatant, weary and faint with the struggle He has already sustained, now bends His face to the ground to drink, to gain fresh strength for a fresh conflict. It is the last draught of water that He will have here below, the last refreshment earth will offer Him, but yet it is a refreshment amid His suffering and woe. O my poor, persecuted, weary Saviour! How ashamed I am of the sloth, the reluctance, the contemptible weakness I display when my calling compels me to go on a toilsome journey, to undertake an onerous task. Henceforth I will under such circumstances call to mind the painful way my Saviour trod.

2d. Consider that it was also a path of ignominy for our Lord. Only think, He, the Holiest of the holy, He, the King of Heaven, is dragged to Jerusalem at midnight, fettered and bound with muddy cords, surrounded by the lowest rabble like a common thief, as if He were a robber and murderer. What a contrast this nocturnal entry of our Lord into the city of David, covered with contempt, affords to His triumphal entry on Palm Sunday. Then those who accompanied Him carried palm-branches in their hands as a token of His victory, now those who are with Him carry lances and spears as a sign of His defeat and signal disgrace. Then a thousand voices were raised to laud and magnify Him, now the dregs of the people deride Him and blaspheme. Then all Jerusalem flocked together to meet Him, with jubilant shouts greeting Him as their King, the Son of David; now He enters Sion's city alone, forsaken even by His own disciples, a prisoner, contemned and maltreated. What a path of ignominy was this which my Saviour trod! How ashamed I feel, beholding what He endured, of my dastardly cowardice and effeminate delicacy, which lead me anxiously to avoid everything that

is likely to expose me to any kind of humiliation, scorn, contempt or ridicule, whilst with the greatest eagerness, the most jealous zeal I follow and delight in those paths which lead to honor and distinction. From henceforward, my soul, think of the ignominious way your Saviour trod, whenever your calling or your conscience obliges you to do something which may be humiliating for you, and render you despicable in the eyes of men.

**3d.** Consider that what enhanced the difficulty and added to the bitterness of our Lord's painful journey to the house of His judge, was the ingratitude and infidelity of men. When He went about in Jerusalem working miracles and healing the sick, so dense a crowd thronged around Him that it was no easy matter to get near Him. When He fed the hungry multitude in the wilderness the people flocked after Him desirous to make Him their King. But when He was dragged through the streets of Jerusalem bound and fettered, no one was found to accompany Him, He had not a single adherent, all abandoned Him, even His apostles went away from Him. Consider the thanklessness, the unfaithfulness of men, impress it upon your mind, that for the future you may build less on human praise, trust less to human promises of fidelity, count less upon human gratitude than heretofore. As long as you are prosperous, and all goes well with you, you will have many friends; as long as you tickle their ears and flatter them with promises of good fortune you will not lack admirers; but if a dark page is turned, or if you brace yourself to tell them the truth, or if adversity overtakes you, how quickly all your adherents fall away from you! Wherefore lay to heart the invaluable admonitions of the Imitation: "Trust not to friends and kinsfolk, for men will sooner forget thee than thou dost think." (B. i. ch. 23.) "I find all to be infirm and unstable whatever I behold out of Thee, my Lord God. For neither will many friends avail me, nor strong helpers bring me succor, nor wise counsel give a useful answer, unless Thou Thyself stand by me; help, strengthen, cheer, teach and keep me." (B. iii. ch. 59.)

## SATURDAY AFTER THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE CHRISTIAN'S DEATH TO THE WORLD.

Represent to yourself our Lord, who lovingly calls to you, saying: "Follow Me." What could be more tender, more pressing than this invitation which your God, your Redeemer addresses to you. Who, hearing it, could turn away and with a stubborn heart disregard it? Yet remember this, it is no easy matter to follow Christ. The road wherein He leads you is the way of the cross, His goal is the death of the cross. Therefore whoso follows Him must walk with Him in the way of the cross, must die with Him as He died on the cross. He must die a mystic death; in a word, he must be crucified, dead to the world, or as St. Francis said, a dead man. What is meant by this? Let us proceed to explain it.

1st. The dead man has indeed all his five senses, but he has no longer the use of them. He is still in the world, but he sees and hears nothing of what goes on around him, he cannot speak, he cannot feel. Thus it is precisely with the Christian, the Religious. To them may be applied in a good sense the Psalmist's words: "They have mouths and speak not; they have eyes and see not; they have ears and hear not" (Ps. cxiii. 5, 6); they live in the world, but they are as if dead; their senses are without perception for the things of the world. This is as it ought to be. As the pious Cassian says: "He who would attain perfection, and be continually recollected in spirit, must be blind, deaf and dumb. For if the doors of the senses are completely closed, the soul will not contract any stain by contact with the things of the world, and will hold intercourse with God the more freely and unreservedly." St. Bernard was thus mortified; for almost the whole of a day he had been walking on the shores of a lake, and yet



when later on, those who had accompanied him were talking of the lake, he asked with surprise of what lake they were speaking. As for you, you allow such liberty to your senses, you look at and listen to all the frivolities of the world, consequently you are by no means dead to the world, and it would be well for you if you were to follow more closely the counsels of St. Dorotheus: Accustom yourself to observe custody of the senses; for to let one's eyes wander to vain things which do not concern one, is the ruin of all the good that is done in the cloister.

**2d.** Consider that a dead man has no will of his own. One may do with him whatever one chooses. It is a matter of perfect indifference to him whether he is clothed in gold and silken garments, or wrapped in rags; whether he is laid on his back or on his face, whether he is buried as a prince or a pauper. This is what you should be like, if you are a Christian, a Religious dead to the world. In a certain sense you ought to have no will of your own. You ought to acquiesce without the slightest opposition in whatever God, or your Superior, would do with you. You ought not to consider any habiliments too mean, any bed too hard, any office too onerous, any place too unattractive for you. How far you are from such complete mortification of your own will! Once when St. Francis had given blessed Brother Giles permission to take up his abode in whatever province, whatever monastery he might prefer, the Brother availed himself of this permission; but before four days were past, he grew uneasy, and he begged the saint not to leave him any longer to follow his own will, but to indicate to him the place where he should remain. And the Seraphic Father himself said: "I desire to obey my Superior and to be so completely subject to him, as never to go anywhere or do anything except in obedience to his will, because he is my master." That was truly being dead in Christ. What are you, my soul?

**3d.** Consider that only the body of the dead man remains on earth, while the spirit is already with God in Heaven. Thus it ought to be with the Christian, the Religious who is dead to the world. He ought in like manner

only to be on earth as far as his body is concerned; his mind, his aspirations and his yearnings ought all to be fixed upon Heaven. We should feel and regard ourselves as pilgrims and strangers upon earth, "for they that say these things," the Apostle declares, "do signify that they seek a country." (Heb. xi. 14.) We ought to exclaim with St. Augustine: "When, O Lord, shall my exile come to an end? When wilt Thou take me to Thyself? When shall I come and appear before the face of God?" (Ps. xli. 3.) Is this your desire, your entreaty, my soul? Alas! it is to be feared that you dwell on the earth not only with your body, but with your soul. "My soul hath cleaved to the pavement" (Ps. cxviii. 25), David was forced to declare, and you will be fain to re-echo his ejaculation, for your mind is engrossed with earthly interests, almost as much perhaps as if you were a man of the world. Seculars consider you in a certain sense as dead, but you are not, otherwise you would say with the author of the Imitation: "All temporal things are no goods at all but rather burdensome to me; it is truly a misery to live upon earth. The more a man desires to be spiritual, the more this present life becomes bitter to him. For to eat and drink, to watch, sleep, rest, labor, and to be subject to other necessities of nature is truly a great misery and affliction to a devout man." (Imit. B. i. ch. 22.) Why, my soul, do you not feel these things to be a misery and a burden? Because you are not yet dead, because both your body and your soul still cleave to earth.

## THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE DAY.

The Gospel for to-day is composed of three distinct parts. First it relates how Jesus was present at a banquet; then an account is given of the healing of the dropsical man; finally we have the parable of those who, being invited to a supper, take the first seats at table. Unlike as these different portions of the Gospel appear at first sight, a close connection—and this is what is so wonderful in the Gospel—exists between them, and they harmonize perfectly with one another. Let us proceed to consider this.

**1st.** “And it came to pass when Jesus went into the house of one of the chief of the Pharisees on the Sabbath-day, that they watched Him.” (St. Luke xiv. 1.) Observe what is told us here: Jesus takes part at a banquet. Nor is this the first time that He does so. We find Him at the nuptial feast on the occasion of the marriage at Cana, we find Him sitting at table when the penitent Magdalen presented herself before Him, we now see Him entertained in the house of Zacheus the Pharisee; in a word, the divine Founder of the Church does not deny Himself all share in earthly enjoyments, on the contrary, He takes part in them and thereby hallows them. The Church, His Bride, acts in a similar manner; not only does she not forbid us to rejoice, but she herself provides us with matter for rejoicing by her beauteous, gladsome feasts, which form a circle throughout the year, a wreath as it were of true joys; and these are for many thousands the only pleasures vouchsafed them in this vale of tears. In short, the spirit of Christianity, the spirit of the Church, the spirit of your Order is not a gloomy one. It rather calls to you in the words of Holy Scripture: “Give

not up thy soul to sadness, and afflict not thyself." (Ecclus. xxx. 22.) Remember that St. Francis liked always to see his disciples looking cheerful and joyous, because as he said, joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Therefore you are at full liberty to take part in the banquet of earthly pleasures, provided you do not do so in the character of a dropsical guest.

**2d.** Consider this: "Behold, there was a certain man before Him who had the dropsy. Jesus, taking him, healed him and sent him away. And Jesus answering spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees saying: Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day? But they held their peace." (v. 2, 4.) Here observe that Jesus healed the man who had the dropsy and would not permit him to remain at table as a lesson for you. Dropsy is a disease which causes all that ought to create healthy humors in the body to turn to water; it is a gradual dissolution of the forces of nature, and in addition to this, the patient experiences the greatest craving for that which is most prejudicial to him, water. Those who are sufferers from spiritual dropsy are they who take part in the feast of earthly delights not as our Lord did moderately, but immoderately. Such as they, intemperate, sensual, gourmands, drunkards, dissolute, ruin the health of their body and destroy the powers of their soul, and the more deeply they drink of this draught, this poison of the soul, the more they thirst for it. From one pleasure they turn to another, they hurry from enjoyment to enjoyment, from feast to feast, till at length, unsatiated and unsatisfied either in body or soul, they fall victims to disease and death. Be ever on your guard against this evil. Take your share in the banquet of earthly joys as a healthy man, in moderation, that is, not as one who is dropsical, in excess. And if hitherto you have sat at table in the character of the unhealthy guest, oh then ask to be healed, ask our Lord to heal you; and remember at the same time that it is on the Sabbath that your cure can best be effected, that is to say, an immoderate craving for earthly gratifications and pleasures will be more easily banished if our soul is accustomed to de-

light in the joy of the Sabbath, joy in God and with God. Is this so in your case?

3d. Consider finally that our Lord addresses an exhortation to the guests after He has healed the man that had the dropsy. "When thou art invited to a wedding sit not down in the first place . . . but go, sit down in the lowest place." (v. 8, 10.) Although these words are intended principally to teach us to be humble, yet they are not foreign to the subject of our present meditation. You may, O Christian, nay under certain circumstances you must take part in convivial pleasures, especially when good fellowship requires you to do so; but then follow our Lord's counsel, take the lowest place; that is to say, do not put yourself forward, keep yourself well in hand; for in the lowest place, that is by moderation and sobriety, you will most easily preserve the "secure mind," which as Solomon tells us, "is like a continual feast." (Prov. xv. 15.) And there is yet another reason why you should act thus: To him who contents himself with the lowest place at the earthly feast, our Lord will say, when he is invited to the marriage feast in Heaven, "Friend, go up higher." (v. 16.) Look upwards to our blessed Lady, the holy apostles, the martyrs, the saints of your own Order; they all sat down in the lowest place at the table on earth; now they occupy the first place in Heaven at the celestial banquet God provides for the redeemed, for whoso despises and renounces temporal gratifications to do the will of God, will be made partaker of heavenly and eternal joys in superabundant measure.

## MONDAY AFTER THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE RICH MAN WHO PLANNED TO BUILD GREATER BARNES.

Represent to yourself the rich man, imagine the satisfaction, the self-complacency with which he contemplates the abundant harvest his lands have produced. He already foresees that his barns will be too small to contain all the fruits of the earth with which God has blessed him. He calculates and deliberates as to what he shall do, and he makes his plans as if he had yet many years to live.

1st. Consider the rich man's good fortune. We read in St. Luke's gospel: "The land of a certain rich man brought forth plenty of fruits." (xii. 16.) That rich man was covetous and godless, yet God bestowed on him copious blessings. If you look around you in the world, you will find as a general rule that the ungodly are not unfrequently very prosperous. Jeremias says: "Why is it well with all them that transgress and do wickedly?" (xii. 1.) And Job asks: "Why are the wicked advanced and strengthened with riches?" (xxi. 7.) St. Gregory the Great gives us an answer to this. He says it is for this reason, in order that more severe chastisements should one day be the portion of those who in this life are not touched by the bountiful gifts they receive. Their prosperity is at the same time a proof of God's bountiful kindness and His terrible justice. The just God of His bounty chooses to reward them here on earth for the little good they do, that He may punish them all the more hereafter; He seeks to win them by His beneficence before He is compelled to interpose with His judgments. But as for the most part the ungodly do not

understand His charitable design, the ease and affluence in which they live is nothing more or less than the repast provided for criminals on the eve of execution. No more than you would dream of envying the condemned criminal or of counting him happy because of the dainties set before him, ought you, my soul, to envy the wicked on account of the luxury and comfort they enjoy. You ought rather to feel hearty compassion for those unhappy sinners. And should you yourself be one of the ungodly who prosper in this world, say, how can you possibly sit at ease at this last meal of the condemned?

**2d.** Consider the rich man's temporal disquiet and trouble. His eyes have not long dwelt with complacent delight on his fruitful lands and abundant crops before the anxious thought arises in his mind: "What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?" (v. 17.) Behold, St. Basil says, even in the midst of abundance this man is uneasy and solicitous: his temporal goods cause him vexation, fear, perplexity. The ungodly, for all their wealth, their vast possessions, are strangers to real peace. How just therefore is what we read in the *Imitation of Christ*: "Many weak and shortsighted men say, Behold how well such a man lives, how rich he is, how great, how mighty and powerful. But fix thine eyes on heavenly goods and thou wilt see that all these temporal things are no goods at all; but are very uncertain and rather burdensome, because they are never possessed without care and fear." Were you, my soul, given to see the distress, the anxiety, the trouble of the heart that beats beneath a gorgeous purple robe; could you listen to the words of woe, the painful consultations that are to be heard within marble palaces; could you take the bitter drops which a guilty conscience, harassing cares mingle in the worldling's cup of joy, you would give God thanks and rejoice in your poverty and the lowliness of your position.

**3d.** Consider the rich man's end. "I will pull down my barns and will build greater; and I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take

thy rest, eat, drink, make good cheer." (v. 18, 19.) Such is the singular reflection wherewith the fortunate rich man composes himself to sleep. In regard to this St. Basil exclaims: What folly, what frivolity! Hadst thou had a soul like that of the swine what worse thing couldst thou have said? But what happened to this man of increasing wealth? "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul; and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" (v. 20.) Such are the words God speaks to him. How quickly has everything been altered for this unhappy rich man! How speedily has the terrible truth formulated by holy Job been fulfilled in his case! "They spend their days in wealth and in a moment they go down to hell." (Job xxi. 13.) Of what use to him now are his barns, his fertile lands, his plans and projects? One night, one unlooked for night robs him of all, and he passes in a moment from temporal to eternal night. O my soul, with this deplorable end before your eyes, do not strive to be rich in earthly goods, but lay to heart our Lord's words: "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God." (v. 21.) Now he is rich towards God who does not possess an abundance of gold and silver, but who is rich in virtue, in the love of God and of his neighbor, in good works. Ask yourself whether you can call such treasures your own. Of them you may, you ought to have an abundance; and in regard to these spiritual fruits it is well for you if you can say: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years." Can you utter these words with truth?



TUESDAY AFTER THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY  
AFTER PENTECOST.

ON VIGILANCE.

Imagine that Jesus, the divine Teacher, is now present in our midst as He formerly was amongst His disciples, and that you hear from His lips those eternal truths, truths, of wondrous depth and beauty, which He teaches to the people "as one having power, and not as the Scribes and Pharisees." With the form of your heavenly Master vividly before your eyes proceed to meditate upon His words.

**1st.** Consider His exhortation: "Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands." (St. Luke xii. 35.) Our Lord here alludes to an eastern custom. If the ruler of a house was absent at a marriage ceremony, it was usual for his servants to stand on the lookout for his return with their long upper garment girded, that is tucked up, to enable them to go more quickly to meet their master, holding lighted torches, ready at the first intimation of his approach to place their services at his disposal. In like manner when our Lord returns from the celestial nuptials which He celebrates in Heaven with His Bride, the Church triumphant, when He comes again to judgment, we ought to be standing in readiness to receive Him, our "loins girded and burning lamps in our hands." According to St. Gregory, the girding of the loins signifies nothing more or less than continence. "Our Lord," says St. Augustine, "by bidding us gird our loins teaches us to refrain from fixing our affections on earthly things." Those only who are chaste, temperate, detached from this world, experience no difficulty, no restraint when called upon to meet their Lord, for they are not encumbered and impeded in walking by the folds of their long and flowing garments, attachment to the things of earth. Thus made

ready, we ought in the second place to hold aloft in the nocturnal darkness of this, our mortal existence, a "burning lamp," the symbol of the flame of our devotion, fed with meditation on the eternal truths as a lamp is fed by oil, that the bright light it emits may be seen by our Lord immediately upon His coming. The life of the vigilant servant of the heavenly Master of the household is a life withdrawn by abstinence and mortification from the interests of this passing world, and tending by means of devout prayer and constant meditation to the eternal and celestial country. Is your life such a life as this?

**2d.** Consider the second admonition our Lord adds: "Be you yourselves like to men who wait for their lord when he shall return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately." (v. 36.) Thus, like servants waiting and watching for their lord on a dark night, not venturing, however weary and sleepy they may be, to close their eyes even for a short time, lest they should be completely mastered by sleep, so we ought never to relax our vigilance for a single moment or in regard to the least matter, but always and everywhere keep in mind the coming of our Lord, that is, the hour of our death. We shall find that most useful. "If," says the blessed Brother Giles, "if the thought of death were ever present to the eye of the soul, if the remembrance of the final judgment, of the chastisements and torment of the lost were continually borne in mind, we should never dream of committing sin and offending God." Reflect on these words, my soul, they are uttered by a watchful servant, and then make this firm resolution: Every night, when I lay down to rest, I will cross my hands upon my breast and stretch myself upon my bed in the position of one who is laid in his coffin, and I will for a short space think within myself how it would be with me if I had died in the course of the day that is just ended; and when I awake in the morning, I will imagine that death has knocked at my door and bidden me arise; and I will spend that day as if I knew it to be my last. This practice will undoubtedly contribute greatly to enable you when your

Lord really "knocketh" to "open to Him immediately" and readily; so that you may not, as those who are unprepared, turn pale with terror, and taken by surprise, hesitate and delay to open; exclaiming in sorrowful accents: "My Lord has come too early, alas too early!"

**3d.** "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching." (v. 37.) Jesus does not merely admonish His disciples, He makes promises to them, He declares those to be blessed who obey His behest. "Amen, I say to you, that he will gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and passing will minister unto them." He will requite His servants for their faithful attention to duty with extraordinary condescension and favor, and will fulfil on their behalf the promise given in St. Matthew's gospel (viii. 11): "Many shall come from the east and from the west and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven." Reflect upon this, my soul. It is undoubtedly difficult and arduous to be ever on the watch, constantly upon one's guard, never to venture to relax one's attention, to unbend the bow, to lay down one's weapons. Yet do not lose heart; the labor is great, and it is followed by a great recompense. Listen to what our Lord says to us in the Imitation: "Oh! hadst thou seen the everlasting crowns of the saints in heaven, and in how great glory they now triumph who once appeared contemptible in this life . . . Thou wouldst not covet the glad days of this life, but rather rejoice to suffer tribulation for God. . . . Lift up therefore thy face to heaven; behold I and all My saints with Me who in this world have had a great conflict, now rejoice, are now comforted, are now secure, are now at rest; and they shall for all eternity abide with Me in the kingdom of My Father." (B. iii. ch. 47.)

# WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## ON THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT SUPPER.

Our Lord is sitting at table in the house of one of the chief of the Pharisees; He has healed the man who had the dropsy, and now making use, as was His habit, of every opportunity to scatter the seed of divine truth in the hearts of men, He proceeds to relate to His fellow guests the parable of the great supper. Place yourself in spirit amongst those who were at table with Him, listen as they did to the parable which had so deep a signification, and meditate upon the words uttered by His sacred lips.

1st. "A certain man made a great supper and invited many." (St. Luke xiv. 16.) According to St. Bonaventure's interpretation, we are to understand this supper as signifying the celestial glory which awaits the Christian at the close, in the evening of life. Our Lord calls it a great supper. And indeed it may well be called great, by reason of Him who gives it, none other than Almighty God Himself. It is great by reason of the viands of which the guests partake, the blissful enjoyment of the beatific vision of God. It is great by reason of the place in which the feast is held—the boundless realms of Heaven. It is great by reason of the period of its duration—it lasts to all eternity. Finally, it is great by reason of the number and distinction of the guests. They are the countless multitude of the elect; the children and favorites, the sons and daughters of a God of infinite majesty. Endeavor, my soul, to realize the surpassing grandeur and greatness of this supper, to which you are also invited, and then consider: Is it therefore so hard a thing to sit for a few years grieving and hungering here below at the table of this mortal existence, if one has before one the

prospect of never ending delight and enjoyment at the glorious feast in Heaven? What can be more hopelessly foolish than to throw away one's chance of partaking of this great supper—and for what do we throw it away? For the sake of satiating oneself for a few moments at the swine's trough of earthly gratifications, with the wretched garbage those animals devour! Unhappily there are only too many such fools.

2d. "And he sent his servant at the hour of supper to say to them that were invited that they should come, for now all things were ready. And they began all at once to make excuse." (v. 17, 18.) The Lord of Heaven sends out His servants to invite the guests. According to St. Gregory these servants represent the Preachers, the messengers of God, the heralds of the Most High, who from Enoch down to the prophets, from the apostles to their successors, continually proclaim the good tidings of the kingdom of God. But although "their sound hath gone forth into all the earth," a vast number do not obey the call, but begin to make excuse. "I have bought a farm and I must needs go and see it." (v. 18.) That is what the first said. And another said: "I have bought five yoke of oxen and I go to try them"; whilst a third excused himself from attending on the plea: "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." (v. 20.) St. Augustine explains the "farm," the landed estate, as symbolical of authority or pride; the oxen, which appertain to the soil, as significant of the earthly minded and avaricious; while the man who is newly married represents those who are enslaved by sensual desires. And truly, my soul, it is these three vices, the concupiscence of the eyes, the concupiscence of the flesh, the pride of life which keep thousands back from the marriage feast in Heaven. It is they, moreover, which either prevent or impede the worthy approach to the holy table on earth; and if you thoroughly examine your heart and ask yourself when it is that you feel most cold, most indifferent in regard to that heavenly banquet, when you partake of it with least devotion, you will find that it is when one of

these three vices has cast its shadow over your soul, when thoughts of pride have taken possession of your mind, when earthly cares engross your attention or sensual desires awake within your breast.

**3d.** The heavenly King now gives orders to His servants: "Go out into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in hither the poor and the feeble, and the lame and the blind." (v. 21.) Those who were first invited, the Pharisees, the Scribes, the ancients of the Hebrew nation paid no heed to the call of the Lord, therefore He now turns to the poor, feeble folk in the streets, within the bounds of the city of Jerusalem and the territory of Judea; but as there are not enough of these to fill the hall where the nuptials are held, i.e., the Church, then the Lord said to the servant: "Go out into the highways and compel them to come in, that My house may be filled." (v. 23.) Accordingly the messenger of God goes forth from the city of Jerusalem out into the highways to those who are outside, without the law, to the Gentiles; and he does not content himself with simply inviting them, he compels them by means of countless blessings, miracles, graces, to enter into God's house. Let your thoughts, my soul, dwell attentively on the actual meaning of this parable, in which we see depicted the superabundant and marvellous charity and grace of our God, and then consider briefly its mystic signification as applied to the sacred supper of the Lord here below. Is it not the truly poor and destitute who in Holy Communion come to Him who refreshes those who labor and are burdened? And are not those the most worthy to "come in," are not those most unmistakably provided with the marriage garment who in the eyes of the world are most despicable? and who because they mortify their senses, are looked down upon as being spiritually poor, blind and dumb? Never was a truer word spoken than that which the Blessed Virgin said: "He hath filled the hungry with good things and the rich He hath sent empty away." The owners of the farm and of the oxen, the husband of the wife, the rich, that is, who enjoy to

satiety the things of earth, go away empty, whilst the poor, the blind, are filled with good things; they are the hungry, for they hunger after justice, and by their mortifications they leave their senses to hunger, they consider themselves as spiritually poor, blind and lame. Consider this, my soul, and perhaps to-day's meditation will give you the key to the problem: How to partake daily of the heavenly feast and yet ever hunger for it. Will you allow yourself to be sent hungry away as being one of the rich?

## THURSDAY AFTER THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE PLACE WHERE OUR LORD HELD THE LAST SUPPER.

The great supper, the celestial banquet, formed the subject of your meditation yesterday. To-day, the day of the week which the Church dedicates to the veneration of the Most Holy Sacrament, we propose to cast a glance at the place where our Lord celebrated His supper for the last time on earth. Represent to yourself the scene depicted in St. Matthew's gospel (xxvi. 17) when "the disciples came to Jesus, saying: Where wilt Thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the Pasch?"

**1st.** Consider the answer our Lord made to this inquiry: "Behold, as you go into the city, there shall meet you a man carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in." (St. Luke xxii. 10.) Thus we see that our Lord selected as the place where the Last Supper was to be eaten the house belonging to the man "who was carrying a pitcher of water." What else does this signify but that our Lord keeps the feast most willingly in that house, that soul, where the waters of true penance, of sorrow and contrition for past sins are to be found. How often you are heard to express regret that you can only give so poor, so beggarly a re-

ception to your divine Guest, and yet you have at your command the most beautiful, the most precious pearls, fit to adorn His crown, the tears of penance, of contrition, of compunction. Wherefore see that you provide yourself with this pitcher of water, if you desire that our Lord should hold His supper within your heart, that is, a supper worthy of such a Guest, replete with consolation and grace for yourself. Soften your hard heart beforehand by holy compunction, instead of expecting all to be done by our Lord. "Give thyself to compunction of heart and thou wilt find devotion," we are told in the Imitation. Brother Giles was wont to say: "Blessed is he who feels constant sorrow for sin, and in bitterness of heart weeps day and night on account of his transgressions." That man is to be esteemed happy in reference to whom Jesus says: "Follow the man carrying a pitcher of water."

2d. "And he will show you a large dining-room, furnished, and there prepare." (v. 13.) Hence we see that it is a large, capacious room that our Lord chooses for the supper, a light, spacious place. This your heart should be, if you would have our Lord come to hold His supper there. It must be a large, a generous heart. You desire to entertain as your guest, Jesus, whose heart in its charity embraces the whole world; and how can you venture to receive that heart glowing with ardent love, a love that comprises all mankind, in your poor narrow heart wherein at best only yourself and a few relatives find a place, and where there is but little space left for your Lord? It ought rather to be so wide and comprehensive that not only your friends and benefactors but also your enemies and persecutors, those who calumniate and injure you may find room therein. The heart where Jesus comes to eat the Pasch must be large, that is, magnanimous, capable of making sacrifices, not one that is egotistic, narrow, censorious. Reflect awhile on this truth, my soul; perhaps you may discover what you have long sought in vain, the reason why your Communions are so dry and unfruitful.



**3d.** Consider that our Lord does not only say a large dining-room, but one that is furnished; and as the Greek word signifies, an upper room, in the upper story of the house. Hence we learn that Jesus desires for the place of supper a place that is raised above the ordinary level and well furnished; a soul, that is, which no longer "cleaves to the pavement," no longer dwells on earth, grovelling in the lower regions of earthly cares and material interests, but which on the pinions of heavenly aspirations soars above the earth, and by holy meditation has composed itself in an attitude of elevated and heavenly contemplation. Our Lord therefore desires a room well furnished, one well prepared for His reception, not an empty, poverty-stricken, cold dining-room. Does your heart for the most part answer to this latter description? Be frank and do but confess how ill-prepared you often are when you approach the heavenly banquet. You certainly would not dare to invite an earthly monarch, nor even any distinguished personage to come to a dwelling so carelessly cleansed, so badly decorated, so poorly furnished as the one which you ask our Lord to enter. Would that the meditation of to-day might so stimulate you that at last you would resolve to obey the behest which our Lord and Saviour addresses to you in the words of the Imitation: "Make ready for Me a large room furnished in which to sup, and I will keep the passover with thee together with My disciples. If thou wilt have Me come to thee and remain with thee, purge out the old leaven and make clean the habitation of thy heart. Shut out the whole world, and all the tumult of vices; sit like a sparrow alone on the housetop and think of thy transgressions in the bitterness of thy soul. For every lover prepares the best and fairest abode for his dearly beloved." (B. iv. ch. 12.)

## FRIDAY AFTER THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE PLACE WHERE OUR LORD OFFERED THE SACRIFICE OF THE CROSS.

Place before your eyes the momentous, the deeply-affecting spectacle of the first celebration of the sacrifice of the cross, when Christ, at the same time Priest and Victim, immolated Himself upon the altar of the cross as an expiatory offering for the whole guilty world. The place where that sublime sacrifice was offered and whither millions of hearts turn this day, is Golgotha, Mount Calvary, an eminence situated without the walls of Jerusalem. Direct your thoughts and your gaze to that spot.

1st. The name Calvary means the place of a skull. This hill was so called because of the skulls and human bones, the remains of the bodies of criminals who were executed there. In this place, to the very name of which shame was attached, where no upright man would be willing to be laid when dead, much less show himself there during his lifetime, our Lord offered His great sacrifice of atonement, and chose it for the scene of His death. Here we shall find abundant matter for meditation. Jesus expires on the spot where evil-doers suffered the penalty of the law, in order to earn pardon for us, the real transgressors, sentenced to eternal death. Christ's blood is shed upon the place of a skull, the place of death, in order that He may thereby conquer death and give new life to all men. Jesus closes His earthly career in that ignominious and shameful locality, in order that we, when our earthly existence is ended, may enter into the realms of eternal glory. 'O the goodness, the love of our God! My soul, whenever thoughts of pride, vain-glory, self-complacency awake within thee, hasten to Mount Calvary, behold your Lord in the place of shame; perhaps that

sight will avail to banish all vain thoughts from your mind.

**2d.** Consider that Mount Calvary is also called Moria; a word which, being interpreted, signifies vision, or contemplation. Truly Calvary is a mount of vision, of contemplation. There the charity and justice of God were manifested in their fairest light, and there you can behold them and meditate upon them. From that mountain you can look into the depths of the divine plan of salvation, infinite and mysterious as it is, and you can also fathom the abyss of human misery, of the guilt of sin. From that mountain you can gaze upon the wondrous drama of our Lord's Passion, the last tragic scene of which was enacted upon that height. From that mountain you can obtain a view of the immeasurable graces and blessings which from thence spread out over the whole world; you can trace the river of life flowing out of this second paradise in four branches, forth from the pierced hands and feet of the Saviour; finally you can contemplate all that is great, noble, admirable, which has been achieved on earth by virtue of the holocaust offered upon Mount Moria. True, in this second Isaac, sacrificed upon Mount Moria, all the nations of the earth are blessed. Would that this mountain might be for you also a Moria, a "land of vision," whereon you might frequently sojourn in holy meditation. Is it so?

**3d.** Consider that Mount Calvary was situated outside the city of Jerusalem. Our Lord desired to suffer death without the city, because His great sacrifice of atonement, as St. Augustine asserts, was not for one city alone, but for the whole world. He wished to erect the cross upon a high mountain, standing in the open country, so that this tree of life might not overshadow Jerusalem only, but the whole earth. As of old Noe's ark remaining stationary upon Mount Ararat was the first sign that the devastating deluge was at an end; so this new Ark, standing upon Mount Calvary, announced to the world, submerged beneath the waters of a mystic deluge, the abatement of that destructive flood. Reflect my soul, upon this and other points for meditation which strike you in regard to the

situation of Mount Calvary; and in conclusion consider this one fact more. As soon as the sacrifice of the cross had been offered on the mountain without the walls of Jerusalem, the oblation on the mountain within the city, the mount whereon the temple stood, was abrogated; nay more, it became a cause of death and perdition, whereas the other was a source of life and salvation. Hasten then, my soul, hasten speedily out of Jerusalem, the sinful city doomed to destruction and ruin, quit the world, that brilliant and wealthy city where too long you have burnt incense to your passions; and betake yourself to Calvary, that lonely mountain, the life of Religion, which men despise; there offer your oblation of self-denial and mortification. By this means alone can you render your salvation sure, for then on the day of our Lord's second advent when the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that is, the votaries of the world, are, together with the guilty city, swept to swift destruction, you, standing on Mount Calvary outside the city, the mount of your spiritual life, far from the world you despise, safe from the judgments of God, will be able, like Moses upon Nebo, to look into the land of promise, the land God will give to His faithful children.

## SATURDAY AFTER THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

We read in the narrative of the Evangelist St. Luke (xvi. 14): "Now the Pharisees who were covetous heard all these things," they heard, that is, our Lord's warning against the unjust mammon. Instead of laying this admonition to heart, "they derided Him." Then our Lord proceeded to speak to them of the terrible judgments that will overtake the rich man who is hardened in sin, relating to them the parable of the rich man and Lazarus the beggar. Listen in spirit to this well-known parable as it

comes from our Lord's lips, and meditate upon the truths it is intended to convey.

**1st.** Consider the temporal lot of the two men who form the subject of the parable. Our Lord says: "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and feasted sumptuously every day." (v. 19.) Fortunate individual! you have wealth and possessions in abundance, your apparel is rich and gorgeous, your table is provided with delicious and costly viands. How differently poor Lazarus fares! "And there was," our Lord continues, "a certain beggar named Lazarus, who lay at his gate, full of sores, desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, and no one did give him; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores." (v. 20, 21.) Consider the words of St. Peter Chrysologus on this subject: "God so ordained that the rich man should sit at the table of the poor, and the poor man at that of the rich, in order that they might be reciprocally helpful to one another. For the disease from which the rich man suffered was that of the soul, the poor man's that of the body. The cure of the poor man's infirmity was delayed in order that his sores might prove the rich man's medicine, that his lamentations might bring him to contrition, his tears induce him to do penance." Such was God's wise design in regard to these two men, and He is generally actuated by the same intention when He places the poor and the rich side by side on earth, that the rich may assist the poor with their temporal wealth, and the poor help the rich to obtain eternal treasures. But Dives failed to perceive God's gracious purpose. "Lazarus was intentionally laid at the rich man's gate," again we quote from St. Chrysologus' writings, "in order that he might not be able to say: I never saw him, no one ever told me about him. He saw him every time he went out and came in, yet he did not take compassion on him." You are astonished at such hardness of heart, my soul, yet how common such conduct is amongst men. How often one finds people, Christian people, even those Christians who aspire to perfection, act most unfeelingly towards one another. They

pass by heedlessly, especially in the case of one whose needs do not appeal strongly to the senses, or what is far more terrible, in the case of a Brother whose sufferings are of a spiritual nature. "Yet God," St. Gregory says, "left the poor man lying at the rich man's gate, in order that the ungodly plutocrat might increase the damnation in store for him, and the poor man, so greatly afflicted, might add to his eternal reward."

**2d.** Consider the everlasting fate of the two men: "The things of time," says St. Chrysologus, "are over and gone, what follows is of eternal duration. Lazarus and Dives both die: the former is received by the angels, the latter becomes the prey of tormentors." For we are told: "And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died; and he was buried in hell." (v. 22.) O unhappy Dives! no one can help exclaiming. Whilst angels carry Lazarus into Abraham's bosom, where, now that the few years of suffering upon earth are at end, he will enjoy everlasting repose, is it said of the rich man that he was cast into hell? No, mark this, not cast into hell, but buried in hell. St. Augustine explains the burial-place in hell as signifying the excess of torture which consumes the proud and unmerciful after this life. "And amid these tortures he lay helpless as a dead man in the tomb, enveloped in agony," to quote St. Chrysologus again, "his eyes alone free that he might see the felicity of the poor man." "Instead of the music of stringed instruments," says St. Basil, "groans now resound in his ear; instead of drinking to the full he is now devoured by intolerable craving for a drop of water; instead of unseemly plays he gazes on profound darkness; instead of vain ambition, the worm that never dieth devours him." Oh that he could once more return to earth and there become a poor despised Lazarus! Impress deeply on your mind the picture here presented to us of future retribution, and above all, the torments of hell which our Lord describes in this parable. In the season of temptation and the hour of suffering remember the rich man's bitter lamentation: "I am tor-

mented in this flame" (v. 24); and in connection with to-day's meditation bear in mind these most true words of the Imitation of Christ: "The more thou sparest thyself now, and followest the flesh, the more grievously shalt thou suffer hereafter, and the more fuel dost thou lay up for the flame." (Imit. B. i. ch. 24.)

3d. Consider that the rich man beseeches Abraham thus: "I beseech thee, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torments. And Abraham said to him: They have Moses and the prophets"—if they will not hear them—"neither will they believe if one rise again from the dead." (v. 27-31.) This lost soul imagines that the best means of preventing his brothers from sharing his own awful fate, would be to send Lazarus to them. Abraham however at once assures him that it would be quite useless to do as he proposes; if they hear not Moses and the prophets, he says, neither would they hear one who was risen from the dead. How often has experience proved the truth of those words. Look at the sinners who will not listen to the preaching of the prophets, that is, of God's ministers, and ask yourself whether the special dispensations of divine Providence make any impression upon them. Do they not see the judgments of God accomplished daily both in the case of solitary individuals and whole nations? Do they not often see their companions in sin struck down by sudden death or overtaken by some grievous calamity? But all this does not touch them. They see these things, just as in the days of Noe men saw the ark being constructed, and like them, they eat and drink, they marry and are given in marriage, until the flood comes and swallows them up in temporal and eternal death. On one who hears not Moses and the prophets, who despises the ordinary means of grace which God has appointed for him in the Church, extraordinary visitations will very rarely produce a greater effect. Alas! even the terrors of hell and of the judgment too often do not avail to break his fetters. Passions indulged hold that man captive who has turned a

deaf ear to the voice of Moses and the prophets, to the warnings of the Church, to the admonitions of his Confessor or of the Superior whom God has set over him. Reflect upon this, my soul, before it is too late.

## THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE CHIEF COMMANDMENT IN THE GOSPEL FOR THE  
DAY.

Imagine that you see the infinitely lovely and lovable Saviour, standing in the midst of the Jews whose object is to tempt Him with their crafty questions—behold Him, an innocent Lamb surrounded by ravening wolves—and listen to the answer which with heavenly wisdom and divine patience He makes to their attacks. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind.” (St. Matt. xxii. 37.) That is the first and greatest commandment of the New Covenant, it is a summary of the whole moral code of the Christian.

**1st.** We ought to love God for our own sake. It was not without intention that our Lord made use of the same words concerning the love of God, when He was asked what one must do to be saved. Very often you think within yourself with a sigh: Would that I knew the right, the sure way to Heaven! Here it is pointed out to you: It is the love of God. You only need to walk in that way and in that way alone; you can walk in it even if you are crooked and lame, blind or dumb; it matters not whether you are counted among the rich or the poor, the learned or the unlearned ones of the earth. You cannot be too poor or too insignificant to love God; remember how St. Bonaventure reminded blessed Brother Giles, who was noted



for his extreme simplicity, of this truth for his consolation and encouragement, telling him that in order to obtain eternal salvation it was enough to love God. And he added that a poor illiterate old woman was just as capable of loving God as the most erudite theologian. Take heart then, my soul; as you now know the way to Heaven, walk henceforth in it, and bear in mind continually the admonition given us in the Imitation: "All is vanity, besides loving God and serving Him alone. For he who loves God with his whole heart fears neither death nor chastisement, neither judgment nor hell, because perfect love prepares for the soul freer access to God."

**2d.** We ought to love God for His own sake. For this reason it is said: "Thou shalt love thy God with thy whole heart." Our love for God must not be a selfish love, only for the sake of our own interest; it ought rather to be the love of our whole heart, a free, generous love of God for what He is in Himself. For we know that God first loved us. Reflect awhile to-day on the love of God for you, think of all that His love has done for you. Pass in mental review the innumerable graces and blessings which you owe to God. Consider that all that you see around you, all that you hear or feel that is good and beautiful is His gift. For you the stars shine, the moon gives light, the sun emits its vivifying rays. For you the flowers blossom, the trees bear fruit; oh say, how is it possible that men do not love God with their whole heart? If St. Francis did but hear the love of God mentioned, his soul was stirred to its inmost depths, and his heartstrings made sweet harmony like the chords of a harp. All creatures for him were only so many mirrors wherein he beheld God, the God of his love; they were so many steps whereby he ascended to God, the God of his love; they were so many melodious notes, resounding within his loving heart. Moreover he had but one desire and that was to love God more, so that he prayed: Grant, O Lord, that the sweet force of Thy burning love may detach me from all things under Heaven, in order that I may die of love and of

longing for Thy love. You see in what a degree Francis loved God, and you hear that same God whom he loved call to you, bidding you love Him with your whole heart; can you remain cold and indifferent?

**3d.** Consider in what the true love of God actually consists. Our Lord says: "Thou shalt love thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole scul, and with thy whole mind." Commenting on this passage, St. Augustine says: "Thou shalt love God with thy whole heart, thy whole soul, thy whole mind, so that all thy thoughts, thy whole life, all thy intellectual powers may be fixed upon, directed towards Him from whom thou hast received all." No part of our being is omitted from this category, nothing within us is to be inactive, for the love of God does not consist in mere sentiments, affections, fine phrases: it demands deeds, sacrifices, entire and complete self-surrender. He loves God perfectly who consecrates himself to His service with all his powers of body and soul, so that he may present his body in chastity and continence as "a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God" (Rom. xii. 1), and all the powers of his soul will ever be turned towards God, as flowers turn towards the sun; the understanding thinking of Him, the affections delighting in Him, the will conforming itself to His will. "God," says St. Augustine, "desires to have thee wholly and entirely. But do not grieve, as though thou wouldst retain nothing wherein to find enjoyment. To love God will be thy truest gain, and if thou dost not love God who made thee, thou hast but little love for thyself." Ask yourself how it is with you in regard to the love of God, and lay to heart this beautiful passage from the Imitation: "Whatever things I love, of these I willingly speak and hear, and carry home with me the images of them. But blessed is the man, O Lord, who for Thee gives all things created leave to depart; who does violence to his nature, and through fervor of spirit crucifies the lusts of the flesh; that so he may be worthy to be among the choirs of angels, all earthly things being shut out, whether external or in-

ternal." He is indeed blessed who loves but one, and that one God; who loves Him with his whole heart, with his whole soul and with his whole mind.

MONDAY AFTER THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY  
AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE PRODIGAL SON.

Suppose yourself to be a spectator of the touching scene when publicans and sinners drew near to the Good Shepherd, and with feelings of contrition pressed familiarly round Him, while the Pharisees, who were apparently just, gazed on the spectacle with malicious looks, and feelings of wrath and rage in their hearts, and said: "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." (St. Luke xv. 2.) Jesus, far from allowing Himself to be disconcerted, or deterred from making known His charity towards sinners, proceeds to propound, with the intention of exhibiting more clearly than ever His loving compassion, the three beautiful and consoling parables of the lost sheep, the lost groat, and the prodigal son. Let this last be the subject of your meditation to-day.

1st. Consider what our Lord says: "A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father: Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his substance." (v. 11, 12.) The Fathers of the Church interpret this passage in two different ways. St. Augustine and St. Gregory the Great consider it to signify the relative position of paganism and Judaism in regard to the work of redemption. By the younger son we are to understand the Gentiles, who in Babylon departed out of their Father's house and becoming scattered amongst the nations, fell to the worship of idols. Israel, however, the elder son, remained at home with his father, that is to say, continued faithful to the one true God. Now when the

younger son, the Gentiles, recognizing their misery and the heinousness of their sin, wasting away with hunger for the truth, returned with contrite hearts to their Father, who received them joyfully and lovingly, the elder, by whom the Jews are represented, was angry, and refused to hold any communication with his repentant brother. This wider, more general interpretation of the parable, which is borne out by the testimony of history, differs from the explanation given by other Fathers, amongst them St. Jerome. They give it a narrower application, as being intended to portray the relation of the sinner to the just in regard to our Redeemer. The younger son is the child of God who, mastered by passion, separates himself from his father. The elder son depicts the law-abiding Pharisees who opposed our Lord, murmuring at the charity He displayed to the prodigal son, i.e., the sinner. Finally you can apply this parable to yourself and to all transgressors. The elder son symbolizes the just man; the younger son the sinner who will no longer tarry in his father's house, will no longer obey his father, but is desirous to spend his substance, the powers of his body and soul, in freedom and independence. Marvel at the beauty and depth of this parable and the divine teaching it contains; meditate upon the three meanings, and keeping the last before your mind proceed with your consideration of the story.

2d. "And not many days after, the younger son gathering all together, went abroad into a far country, and there wasted his substance, living riotously." (v. 13.) This departure is indeed one to be deeply regretted. When the young man quits the paternal roof, how good and high-principled he is, how richly endowed with mental and physical gifts. How kind, how indulgent, how loving is the father whom he forsakes! What a pleasant, happy, peaceful home he abandons! And what is it for? In order to go abroad into a far country, and there squander all his money, destroy his bodily health and strength by debauchery, and ruin his splendid spiritual endowments by plunging into a vortex of sinful amusements.

Meditate, my soul, on this sad course of life, and weep, not indeed for the prodigal in the parable, but for what you yourself are. Or has your conduct perhaps been more exemplary? Have you never forsaken your Father, never wasted your substance, your temporal and spiritual treasures, and especially the rich inheritance of divine grace which was your portion, in a far country, there where your soul ever felt itself an alien, in the kingdom of the evil one, far from your God? Let your conscience answer this question, and according to what that answer is, either pour out your heart in thankfulness or in contrition; at all events conceive a heartfelt compassion for those who are on the eve of becoming prodigal sons; and let your compassion for them take a practical form by interceding in prayer on their behalf or by administering a friendly rebuke to them.

3d. "And after he had spent all, there came a mighty famine in that country, and he began to be in want. And he went and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine." (v. 14, 15.) O unhappy young man, how low art thou fallen! Thou didst turn thy back on the well filled table in thy father's house; now thou art hungry, for, as the Ven. Bede says, in that place where the father is not there is starvation. Separated from God, the soul, after she has had, contrary to her true nature, a surfeit of earthly gratifications, begins to crave for the celestial food of divine truth and grace which alone is suited to her taste and to her needs and which she has lost. Nor is this all. The young man found the mild discipline enforced in his father's house too strict, subjection to that father's gentle authority too onerous, he longed to be free; and now he, the free-born son of the house, has taken service with a farmer, he who once enjoyed intimate intercourse with his high-bred father and the distinguished friends of his father, now spends his days in the company of filthy swine. Here we see the lot of the sinner. He exchanges the light yoke of subservience to his God for the degrading servitude of sin; the fellowship of beauteous angels

he exchanges for the companionship of foul demons. He who formerly was nourished with the holy sacraments, now with difficulty is able—or rather seeks—to still the pangs of hunger with the husks the swine eat, the unruly, loathsome pleasures of earth, which like the briny sea-water only increases the thirst the more one drinks it. Endeavor to realize to some extent the misery in which the prodigal son was sunk, and form suitable resolutions according as you see your own condition to approximate more or less closely to his; at any rate pray and perform acts of penance for your erring brother and sister, and speak a word of warning to them. See that you do not resemble the elder brother, who was angry instead of rejoicing when the son who was lost returned to his father's house.

## TUESDAY AFTER THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON.

In commencing to-day's meditation, place yourself once more in the sad, deplorable condition and state of mind of the prodigal son. Think that you see the unhappy youth hungry, wasted away with want and misery, grief and remorse, alone beside his herd of swine, distracted by varying emotions and conflicting resolutions, until at last, struck by a ray of divine grace, he exclaims:

**1st.** "I will arise and go to my father, and say to him: Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee. I am not worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." (St. Luke xv. 18, 19.) At length, having reached the utmost limits of the path of error and career of vice, the unhappy sinner comes to himself. He remembers the happiness that formerly was his, that he enjoyed beneath the paternal roof; he becomes

acutely conscious of his present misery and wrong-doing, and he expresses this consciousness in the confession: "Father, I have sinned, etc." That is the first syllable that he utters, the confession of his guilt to Him who is the Judge of our misdeeds and the God of mercy; who knows everything and yet waits for the words of confession from our lips. For he disburdens himself of the load of guilt who takes on himself the burden of confession; and he who by self-accusation disarms his accusers, robs of its sting the charge brought against him. How valuable is the counsel these words contain! Would that you always followed it, and that you imitated the prodigal son in his penance as you imitated him in his divergence from the path of virtue.

**2d.** "And rising up he came to his father. And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion, and running to him, fell on his neck and kissed him." (v. 20.) Oh the infinite love and mercy this simple narrative reveals! Who can read it without emotion? Meditate upon it word by word; follow the footsteps of the contrite son, of the forgiving father, and you will find ample food for thought. Here we see the ways of divine compassion. Desirous of our conversion, it goes forth to meet the penitent sinner, it embraces the soul that does penance, and for her encouragement gives her the kiss of peace. Commenting on this passage St. Ambrose exclaims in a strain of rapture: "He comes to meet thee whilst thou art yet far off, that no one may detain thee on the way. He falls on thy neck as it were with all the warmth of paternal affection, to raise thee from the ground where thou liest prostrate, heavily laden with the burden of sin, immersed in the things of earth. I would therefore rather be a son, than a lamb. For the stray lamb is sought and found by the shepherd, the prodigal son is received with honor by his father." How often, my soul, have you in like manner experienced the love of your heavenly Father! In the sight of God a wretched, ragged beggar, you present yourself before Him, and scarcely has the confes-

sion: "I have sinned," escaped your lips, before He clasps you to Him with the kiss of peace, He arrays you again in the robe of grace which you had lost, He gives you back the signet-ring, restoring you to the dignity of a son which you had forfeited, He confers on you new graces, in order that with them, as with new shoes upon your feet, you may advance steadily in the path of virtue which you have again entered. Moreover He invites you to His table, rejoicing with you in the eucharistic banquet of gladness. Dwell in thought on the fathomless depth of the fatherly love of our God, and awaken within your breast sentiments of admiration, of love, of thankfulness.

**3d.** "Now his elder son was in the field, and when he came" and heard and saw what was going on in the house, "he was angry and would not go in." (v. 25, 28.) Instead of rejoicing with his father at his brother's return, he was angry; instead of sympathizing in his father's delight, he reproached him, saying: "Behold, for so many years do I serve thee and I have never yet transgressed thy commandments, and yet thou hast never given me a kid, to make merry with my friends; but as soon as this thy son is come, who hath devoured his substance with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf." (v. 29, 30.) Compare the speech of the elder son with what the younger says. The latter speaks with the greatest humility and makes no claim to be placed on an equality with his brother, he only asks to be treated as one of the day-laborers in his father's employ. The words of the elder son on the contrary display self-complacent pride and repulsive envy. It was through his father's kindness that he was allowed to remain at home: did he not value the affection that led his father to say: "Son, thou art always with me, and all that I have is thine." (v. 31.) If he was really so exemplary, a true son of his compassionate father, would he not for that very reason have rejoiced with his father? Consider this, my soul, and guard against the fault of this elder son. Forget not, if your brother goes wrong, and you remain with your father, that it is no



merit on your part, but only a grace God grants you, for which you will in due time be abundantly rewarded. Forget not that even in Heaven there is more joy upon one sinner that doth penance than upon ninety-nine just persons. Forget not, that you will also be a prodigal son, if God should withdraw the support of His grace from you. And if you are really one of the just, you will not miss your recompense, your Father's love for you will not cease, for He calls the elder son His child. But it is only natural, it only answers to the spontaneous impulse of an uncorrupted heart that, as our Lord says: "It was fit that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead and is come to life again; he was lost, and is found." (v. 32.) But although that may be quite natural, yet does not a feeling of envy, a sort of surprise stir within you, when you see a Brother, a Sister, who formerly only too nearly resembled the prodigal son, now receiving special favors from God and their Superiors? when you see them, after all, better treated than you are, who were always "with your Father"? That it may be otherwise with you, remember how much you blame the speech of the elder son in the parable.

## WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON TRUE CONTRITION FOR SIN.

Once more place before you the image of the prodigal son entering into himself. Realize his profound, bitter sorrow and contrition, observe that he no longer considers himself worthy to be called a "son"; see how keenly he feels, how truly he means what he says, when with tears he exclaims: "Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee"; and then the desire will probably awaken within your heart to be like the prodigal in his repentance, as you were like him in his sin.

**1st.** Consider: What is contrition? The sacred Council of Trent thus defines it: "Contrition is a sorrow of the soul and an abhorrence of past sins, with the firm resolve to sin no more in future." Consider these several characteristics of contrition one by one. Sorrow above all is essential to contrition; that is, not a passing emotion, but a real affliction of soul, which is based upon the detestation, the abhorrence wherewith sin inspires us. Only that which is most repugnant to us, and which we would consequently right gladly thrust far from us really causes us pain. Contrite sorrow is therefore in the first place hatred, abhorrence of sin. But whoso is sorry for sin, and hates and loathes his sin, is as a matter of course determined not to commit it again, for to do so would prove that he did not hate, but loved it. True contrition is therefore a resolute turning away of the will from sins which have been or may be committed, united to grief of soul. Thus the main point in contrition consists in the attitude of the will, not the state of the feelings; in hatred and loathing, not in effusive tears. "If sin is displeasing to thee," says a great master of the spiritual life, "because thou hast thereby offended God, thou hast true contrition. As regards the other emotions (sensible grief, tears, sighs, etc.) which take their rise in the sensitive part of our nature, accept them gratefully, if God is pleased to grant them to thee; but let it not disquiet thee, if thou hast them not, for God does not require of thee what is beyond thy power to give. But what He does demand from thee, and what is entirely within thy power to produce, is that sorrow which is the result of a firm determination never to offend against Him again." Think over these words, and learn how to awaken true contrition of heart.

**2d.** Consider that what is primarily and principally calculated to excite this contrition within us, and lead us to conceive this hatred and abhorrence of sin, is the consideration of the loathsomeness of sin. "Sin," says the holy Archbishop Antony, "is so utterly foul, that in comparison with it any bodily defilement such as leprosy, festering sores, nay the most disgusting carrion or the filth of a

whole world is as nothing in the sight of God and His saints." "Did men but know," says St. Gregory, "how horrible are the wounds inflicted on the soul, how horribly disfigured the soul is in God's eyes by one mortal sin, he would struggle against it even to death." My soul, have you never had a purulent ulcer on your body, have you never seen a partly decomposed body? What a loathsome sight it presented, how disgusting the effluvium from it! Now sin is a spiritual ulcer, and the soul that is tainted with mortal sin resembles a decomposed corpse. Look at a godly, virtuous young man, and contrast his healthy, blithe, pleasing appearance, the innocent expression of his bright, clear eyes, with the distorted, bloated features of one who is addicted to vice, already branded with the mark of reprobation, whose ruined health and diseased body, corrupt even before death, are a true index to the horrible state of his soul in consequence of mortal sin. "Woe to you, miserable mortal," cries St. Bernard, "for thou hast painted over the image of God with the likeness of the devil." "Behold, O Christian soul," such is the exhortation St. Bonaventure gives us, "in how fair and comely a form God created thee! See how He adorned thee with gifts of grace yet more lovely and precious than those of nature; now look at thyself and see how hideous thou hast become because of sin!" Meditate frequently, my soul, on the abominable nature of sin until it sickens you, and then perhaps you may learn truly to hate and abhor it.

**3d.** Consider yet another motive to lead you to true contrition, that is the fatal consequences of sin. It was this that first brought the prodigal son to repentance. Sin is not only odious in itself but terrible in its consequences. Not only does it rob the soul of her supernatural beauty, it also closes against her the golden gates of paradise, and precipitates her into the abyss of hell. One single mortal sin will counteract all the exertions, annihilate the results of a lifelong struggle; nay, the bitter Passion of Jesus Christ, His precious blood, His cruel death, are null and void, as far as you are concerned, if you are guilty of one mortal sin. God, the most merciful, the most bountiful,

the most loving God, sees His only-begotten Son suffering, bleeding, dying for you, and yet He is compelled to sentence you to everlasting damnation, if you die in mortal sin. Those are only the eternal consequences of sin. Let us glance briefly at its temporal consequences. St. Laurence Justinian says that no words can express the deadly nature of sin. Sin once overspread the earth and destroyed the whole human race, with the exception of eight persons. Sin drew down fire from heaven, on the cities of Sodom, and because of it they and all their inhabitants were burnt up. Sin was the cause for which the earth opened and swallowed up Core, Dathan and Abiron alive. Why, O man, dost thou complain of misfortunes, sickness, persecution, poverty, misery and want? These are all only the consequences of sin! How indeed is it that we can tolerate for an instant anything so fatally hurtful to us, that we do not feel the utmost detestation and abhorrence of this evil thing, that it does not cause us acute pain to have stained our heaven-born, beauteous soul, cleansed in the blood of Christ, with what is so hateful in itself, so ruinous and destructive to ourselves?

Consider this well, and then pray with the Psalmist: "Give us for our drink tears in measure" that we may bewail our sins in deep contrition of heart.

## THURSDAY AFTER THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE REWARD OF THOSE WHO FORSAKE ALL AND FOLLOW  
CHRIST.

The apostles, as we now see them, have already left all, their houses, their families, their calling; and they are gathered around Jesus, for whose sake they have abandoned all; they are gathered around Him who Himself had not where to lay His head. But it is not without hope of some advantage to themselves that they stand round

Him and follow Him. Peter is again the spokesman; he formulates the hopes and expectations of his fellow apostles when he asks our Lord this question:

**1st.** "Behold, we have left all things and have followed Thee; what therefore shall we have?" (St. Matt. xix. 27.) Certainly they had not left vast riches, a large property, but yet they had left all that they possessed, all that they loved on earth; father, mother, wife or child. Now St. Gregory says: He has given up a great deal who has kept back nothing for himself; he has given up a great deal who has surrendered his all, little as that all may be. What we have, we love, and what we have not we seek with eager longing to obtain. Therefore both Peter and Andrew left much, since they both gave up even the desire to possess anything. St. Augustine says much the same in other words: He despises all who not only despises what he could possess, but what he wishes to possess. Thus if it is a question of forsaking all, it is not merely the fact of giving up the thing we possess, but of denuding ourselves of all attachment to them, which gives us the right to say with truth in St. Peter's words: "Behold, we have left all." And in this sense certainly there are but few who can echo the apostle's words. Hence the great ascetic says: "Who can find the man who is truly poor in spirit and stripped of every creature? Far and from the uttermost coasts is the price of him." And he says again: "If a man give his whole substance it is yet nothing. And if he do great penance, it is yet little. And if he have laid hold of all knowledge, he is still far off. And if he have great virtue and a devotion glowing exceedingly, there is still much lacking to him: that is to say, that one thing which is above all necessary to him. What is that? That having forsaken all things he should forsake himself, and wholly go out of himself, and retain no personal affection." Consider these words, my soul, and then ask yourself: Can I say with truth I have left all things?

**2d.** Consider what the reward is which our Lord promises to Peter. "Amen, I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall

sit on the seat of His majesty, you shall also sit on twelve seats, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (v. 28.) Jesus Christ is a King, and when one day, returning as the Judge of the living and the dead, He takes His seat upon His throne as the King of Heaven and earth, then the apostles who now have become poor and have been despised for His sake will share in His glory, will share His regal power and dignity. This that the Redeemer promises is surpassingly grand and sublime. Try to realize what the fulfilment of this promise involves. When all mankind, when all the great and mighty ones of earth stand before the tribunal of the supreme Judge in fear and trembling, the apostles will sit upon their thrones in royal dignity and majesty in order that they may participate, though in what manner we cannot, it is true, at present clearly apprehend, in our Lord's office of Judge. Now according to St. Thomas of Aquin, by the apostles we are to understand all who on earth were truly poor in spirit, as well as those who actually led an apostolic life; and St. Bernard asserts that this distinction is awarded to all who are perfect, who can truly say with St. Peter: "Behold we have left all and have followed Thee."

**3d.** Consider the further promise our Lord makes: "And every one that hath left house or brethren or sisters, or father or mother or wife or children or lands for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold and shall possess life everlasting." (v. 29.) What a reward is this! To receive for what is temporal things eternal, for what is transitory the intransitory, would alone be worth all earthly privations. But our Lord goes further, He promises yet more. He promises an hundredfold, and that not only hereafter but even here, in this life, for He says expressly in St. Mark's gospel (x. 30) that we shall receive "an hundred times as much, now in this time." Pause awhile and dwell on this thought, my soul. Whosoever, St. Jerome says, renounces his temporal possessions out of love for our Saviour, will, as a recompense for so doing, receive spiritual treasures which, in comparison with the others and in their own intrinsic worth,

are to them as one to a hundred. Nor is this all. Not only do you gain greatly in regard to spiritual riches and blessings, but also in temporal matters. From how many cares, from how much discontent, trouble, anxiety, affliction of heart will you not be relieved, as soon as for Christ's sake you cast off all attachment to earthly possessions and friends, for as the Wise Man says: "The fulness of the rich will not suffer him to sleep" (Eccl. v. 11), and the poor in spirit is a hundred times more contented, more happy, more free from cares than one whose heart is set upon his riches. If, O reader, you are a Religious and as such have literally followed the foregoing words that our Lord spoke, consider this that Rodriguez writes: "Thou hast left a house for Christ's sake, and now thou possessest many houses, which God bestows on thee in return for that one. Thou hast left father and mother, and God gives thee in place of those parents many fathers who provide better for thee, and are far more concerned for thy true welfare. Thou hast left thy brothers, and thou dost find in their stead many brethren, who love thee for God's sake, and without any admixture of selfishness in their affection. Thou hast left several servants in the world—or perhaps none at all—and here one of thy brethren serves thee as cook, another as infirmarian, etc. Furthermore, go to whatever quarter of the world thou mayst choose, and there thou wilt find thy house ready to receive thee with the full complement of servants." Is not this receiving a hundredfold already in this life? And then after that comes life eternal! O my soul, blush with shame for thy discontent. Before this day closes, become poor in spirit, if you live in the world; and if you are in the cloister, forsake all, yourself as well, and you "shall receive an hundred times as much now in this time, and in the world to come life everlasting." (St. Mark x. 30.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY  
AFTER PENTECOST.

ON OUR LORD'S THRONE IN HEAVEN AND ON MOUNT  
CALVARY.

On this day, the day whereon we recall to mind our Lord's death, in spirit ascend the Mount of Calvary, and there behold your Redeemer, hanging on the cross, lacerated with wounds, covered with blood, tortured by excruciating pain and anguish, forsaken by God and man. What has brought Him to the cross, that terrible instrument of torture? What crime does His earthly Judge ascribe to Him? Read the superscription and you will know: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" is inscribed upon it. Yes, indeed, it is as a king that He hangs upon the cross. He is still a king, though certainly a very different king now upon Mount Calvary to the king He formerly was in Heaven. There majesty is His throne, and here ignominy.

1st. Consider our Lord's throne in Heaven. The prophet Isaiah was privileged to behold Him there; he thus describes what he saw: "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated; and His train filled the temple. Upon it stood the seraphims: the one had six wings and another had six wings; with two they covered His face, and with two they covered His feet, and with two they flew. And they cried one to the other, and said: Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts, all the earth is full of His glory. And the lintels of the house were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke." (Is. vi. 1-4.) The Lord Jesus upon His throne was also seen by another, St. John, the prophet of the New Covenant, who thus speaks of what he saw: "There was a throne set in heaven and upon the throne



One sitting. And He that sat was to the sight like the jasper and the sardine-stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats; and upon the seats four and twenty ancients sitting clothed in white garments and on their heads were crowns of gold. And from the throne proceeded lightnings and voices and thunders, and there were seven lamps burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. . . . The four and twenty ancients fell down before Him that sitteth upon the throne, and adored Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power; because Thou hast created all things, and for Thy will they were, and have been created." (Ap. iv. 2-5, 10, 11.) Contemplate awhile this splendor and majesty, this aureola of glory and light that surrounds our Lord upon His throne in Heaven, listen to the shouts of hosanna, behold this infinitude of bliss and of grandeur; then turn your eyes again to earth.

**2d.** Contemplate our Lord enthroned on Calvary. Oh what a sad contrast meets us here! All is indeed different; the bright light of Heaven is changed into the gloomy blackness of night, and the blissful, blessed life into cruel death. Now the throne of our King is the cruel, the disgraceful wood of the cross. And this cross is erected in the worst, the lowest spot in Jerusalem, the place where criminals are executed. Instead of being surrounded by the ancients with their golden crowns, and the seraphim clad in garments of light, He is placed between two thieves; instead of the glory of celestial brightness about Him He is shrouded in weird, gloomy darkness; instead of the sound of a thousand voices crying: Holy, holy, holy, mockery and contempt, the blasphemies of the executioners and Pharisees meet His ear; and instead of shining like an emerald in the white robes of ineffable brightness, He hangs naked, blood-stained, crowned with thorns upon a cross. O throne of torture

and of shame! And if you would know, my soul, what is the appearance of the King now upon the cross, the same regal personage whom the prophet beheld upon His celestial throne, environed with indescribable beauty and magnificence, listen to the lamentations that prophet utters: "There is no beauty in Him, nor comeliness, and we have seen Him and there was no sightliness that we should be desirous of Him; despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity, His look was as it were hidden and despised." (Isaias liii. 2, 3.) Vast and incomprehensible is indeed the difference between these two thrones! What induced the merciful King to leave His glorious throne in Heaven, come down to earth and ascend the ignominious throne of the cross? It was the love He bore to you—to you, a miserable sinner.

**3d.** Consider further the cause and the object for the sake of which our Lord exchanged His throne in Heaven for the throne of the cross. To be "ruler of the earth," lord of creation, supreme among God's creatures, such is man's grand destiny. But through sin he lost that regal dignity and sank to the level of an abject slave, and became a servant of sin. For that reason the Son of God left the golden throne in Heaven and ascended that of the cross, in order to reinstate man in the regal dignity he had lost, to deliver him from the slavery of sin and the tyranny of the devil and raise him to the throne in Heaven where the redeemed of mankind are destined to fill the places left vacant by the angels who fell. This is why St. Peter says of the redeemed: "You are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation" (I. St. Peter ii. 9), and in reference to them St. John writes: "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead and the Prince of the kings of the earth, who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us a kingdom and priests to God and His Father." (Apoc. i. 5, 6.) Consider this, O my soul. The throne of our Lord in Heaven is undoubtedly infinitely glorious and beautiful, but His

throne on Calvary abounds in blessings and possesses infinite graces for us; and if it ever be granted us to reign with Christ in Heaven, it is to the throne of the cross that we shall owe it. Wherefore prostrate yourself to-day in the spirit of contrition, love and gratitude before that throne, and ever bear in mind this one truth: If you desire to sit with Christ on the glorious throne of eternal joy in Heaven, you must now ascend with Him the throne of shame and suffering, the cross, remembering the apostle's exhortation: "If you partake of the sufferings of Christ, rejoice, that when His glory shall be revealed you may also be glad with exceeding joy." (I. St. Peter iv. 13.)

## SATURDAY AFTER THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE TEACHING OF OUR LORD CONCERNING HELL.

On this, the last day of another week, imagine yourself to have reached the last day of your life, that solemn moment when death's cold hand is laid on you and you are compelled to go forth from this world into eternity. No rescue is possible, no delay will be granted you. Pale and terror-stricken, you feel that the hour has come when you must appear before the terrible, the inexorable Judge. And this one hour, this single moment will decide your whole eternity. Upon it depends whether you may eternally enjoy the felicity of Heaven, whether you will be enthroned for evermore in the celestial courts, or cast into the horrible abyss of hell for all eternity. If the latter should be your fate, are you aware of the awful future that awaits you? Our Lord Himself tells you what you have to expect. Meditate on His words.

1st. "Cast him out into exterior darkness." (St. Matt. xxii. 13.) Thus we learn that hell is pre-eminently a place of darkness, "the eternal night of damnation," as

St. Gregory says. Darkness is the opposite of light; it is related to death, and in its train follow fear, horror, disquietude and sadness; it is a word never used in a good sense. Only think, my soul, of the condition of a blind man who is condemned to pass his whole life in perpetual night and darkness; try to realize what it would be to be confined for years, perhaps for your whole lifetime in a dismal dungeon where no ray of light can ever penetrate; imagine yourself buried alive in a dark, tomb-like vault—what a deplorable fate! Now as is this blind man, this prisoner, this individual who is buried alive, so are the lost in hell. They are cast, as is said in the Book of Job, “into a land that is dark and covered with the mist of death, a land of misery and darkness where is the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth.” (Job xxi. 22.) Woe betide the unhappy sinner, who seeks the darkness that under cover of it he may work the works of iniquity; he will expiate them in eternal darkness, he will one day hear the appalling words of the prophet addressed to him: “Sit thou silent and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans” (Is. xlvii. 5), and he will cry in lamentation with the Psalmist: “They have laid me in the lower pit, in the dark places and in the shadow of death.” (Ps. lxxxvii. 7.)

2d. Consider the further description our Lord gives of hell: “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Thus nothing breaks the silence of that terrific darkness but cries and gnashing of teeth. Pause awhile and consider the twofold expression our Lord employs. Weeping, howling is the expression, the utterance of pain and grief, and truly of no ordinary pain, but a great and violent pain that does not merely move the sufferer to complain and shed tears quietly, but compels the damned to cry aloud with agony and torture. Moreover the reprobate experience this woe, this torment in their souls as well as in their bodies. Only think of the mental anguish of a mother who has lost her only child; represent to yourself the unspeakable torture and desolation of a soul who deems herself forsaken by God; imagine the

gnawing regret and consuming grief of a man who is banished to a distant barren region, and is tortured by homesickness. Then ask yourself what is the grief of a mother in comparison to that of the damned, of one who has sustained a loss infinitely greater than that of a child, who has lost that for which he was destined, the goal of his life, eternal felicity? What is the suffering of a soul who imagines herself forsaken by God in contrast to the grief of one whom God has really abandoned? And how can the pain of longing to return to one's native land bear comparison with the agony of eternal unsatisfied yearning after the celestial country, the soul's true home? And in regard to the bodily pains and torture which cause the lost souls to weep and cry aloud, listen to what is written in the Imitation of Christ: "In what things a man hath sinned, in these he shall be more heavily punished. There the slothful are plied with fiery goads, and the gluttons will be tormented with extreme thirst and hunger. There the luxurious and the lovers of pleasure will be bathed in burning pitch and stinking brimstone, and like mad dogs the envious will howl for grief. There is no vice which will not have its proper torment. There the proud will be filled with all confusion, and the covetous be straightened with most miserable want." Choose to weep now, my soul, that thus you may escape this eternal weeping.

**3d.** Our Lord adds: "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." To gnash one's teeth is a sign of anger, of rage, of hatred. In hell there reigns a twofold, a threefold hatred, which impels the damned to gnash their teeth. Those unhappy souls hate God before all else. They cannot, they may not love Him any longer, therefore they hate Him, and the more they hate Him, the more they gnash their teeth at Him, so much the more do they increase the fire that tortures and consumes them. What awful misery of the soul! Created to love God, she is condemned to hate Him eternally. In the second place the damned rage with wild fury against themselves; they hate their body, the instrument of the sins for which they suf-

fer, and they hate their soul, which has brought them to this misfortune. They would fain be annihilated, so great is their abhorrence of themselves, but this is impossible; they would fain kill themselves, but alas! they are destined to live for ever. O awful torture of the soul! Created to attain happiness by love and legitimate self-love, she is condemned to eternal hatred of self. Thirdly, the lost hate one another, and this is what makes hell to be hell. Think of the wretched life of married people between whom discord prevails, represent to yourself the pitiable condition of a family, a Community, a cloister where there is no peace and concord, and then endeavor to conceive the appalling idea of hell filled throughout with devils and reprobate souls eternally at war with one another, cursing, hating, raging at one another, gnashing their teeth in the violence of their fury. But let this be enough for to-day! Close your eyes and for one moment imagine yourself in that awful place of darkness where "there is weeping and gnashing of teeth," and then remind yourself that it stands within your own power either to escape or be plunged into that unutterable anguish—to-day, to-morrow perhaps, but whether any longer who can tell?

## THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE MAN SICK OF THE PALSY.

Place vividly before your mind the affecting scene depicted by the Evangelist in to-day's Gospel. Imagine that you see our Lord surrounded by an immense, surging multitude, see how laboriously and yet how perseveringly the four men who are carrying the man sick of the palsy endeavor to bring him into the Saviour's presence; behold how they go up on the roof and let down the sick man with his bed by ropes, never resting until they have laid

him at Jesus' feet. Keep this scene before your eyes during your meditation.

**1st.** "And behold, they brought unto Him one sick of the palsy, lying on a bed." (St. Matt. ix. 2.) This man who is sick of the palsy represents those persons to whom God sends sickness as a punishment for their sins and also for their salvation, for, as the Ven. Bede writes: "Our Lord, by granting forgiveness of sin to the sick man before healing him, gives us to understand that the greater part of our physical maladies are the consequence of sin." Yet observe the teacher whose words we quote does not say *all* sicknesses are the result of sin. There are other causes for them, and he proceeds to enumerate these causes as follows: "There are five reasons for which men are visited with bodily maladies: Either to increase their merits, as in the case of Job and of the martyrs, or to keep them humble, as when the angel of Satan was sent to St. Paul (II. Cor. xii. 7) or to lead to the confession and expiation of sin, as in the instance of Mary, the sister of Moses (Num. xii.) and of the palsied man in the Gospel, or for the glory of God, like the man who was born blind (St. John ix.) or finally, bodily sickness may be the commencement in this world of the torment of the damned, as was the case with Herod (Acts xii.) and Antiochus (II. Mach. ix.)." Meditate upon this explanation given by the saint, and you will clearly perceive that bodily sickness, far from being a great evil, is often the greatest blessing and benefit from the hand of God. "A grievous sickness maketh the soul sober" (Ecclus. xxxi. 2), says the Wise Man of the Old Testament. Listen to the counsel a patriarch of the desert once gave to a sick man for his consolation: "My son," he said, "do not let this illness trouble and afflict thee, on the contrary give God thanks for it; for if thou art no more precious than iron, it is a fire which will cleanse thee from rust and impurity, and if thou art gold, it will serve to refine and perfect thee." And we read of St. Clare, who for twenty-eight years suffered tortures from all kinds of diseases, that when her

Confessor exhorted her to be patient, she uttered these admirable words: "Since through the instrumentality of the great St. Francis I have known the grace of Jesus Christ my Redeemer, I have found no illness burdensome, no pain intolerable, no work of penance onerous." But, you will perhaps say, suppose my sickness were the beginning of eternal punishment? Consider what follows.

2d. According to the account given by St. Mark (ch. ii. 3) there were four bearers who brought the man sick of the palsy to our Lord, of whom it is said in the Gospel: "And Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the man sick of the palsy: "Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee." Here mark two things: Four bearers carried the sick man to the Physician whose help they sought. If you desire that your illness should not prove, as you dread lest it should, the beginning of eternal torment, but should rather serve to cleanse you from your sins, you must be carried to our Lord by four bearers. Your depressed and broken spirit must rouse itself to confess your misdeeds, the thought of death must be present to your mind, besides the fear of hell and the hope of everlasting salvation. These four bearers will bring you also to Jesus, to Him who can save you. The second thing to which you must pay attention is this: the Evangelist expressly says, Jesus, *seeing their faith*. He does not mention the faith of the sick man, but of the men who carried him thither, and for the sake of their faith relief was afforded to the sufferer. Here we see the power exercised by faith and charitable intercession on behalf of another, for, as St. Chrysostom remarks, a man often owes his cure to the faith of some one else. Wherefore, my soul, learn hence in seasons of sickness and affliction to claim the assistance of the prayers and vicarious penances of your Brethren and Sisters, for as Scripture tells us "the Lord will hear the prayers of the just." (Prov. xv. 29.) Many a time God grants to the loving intercession of one of your Brethren on your behalf what He has denied to your own prayers. This truth is confirmed by countless instances in the pages of Holy Scripture; remember how God would have consented even to



spare Sodom at Abraham's entreaty (Gen. xviii. 22), how through Lot's intercession He did not destroy the city of Segor (Gen. xix. 21), and how often Moses' prayers were the means of averting evil from Israel. If therefore you are sick, either in body or in spirit, look around in the twofold manner mentioned above for the four bearers; appeal to them, and to you also it will be given to hear the consoling words: "Be of good heart," and thus you may be assured that your sickness will not prove the commencement of your eternal damnation.

**3d.** Consider the beautiful, the touching example given us by the four bearers. Nothing deters them from accomplishing their object, no difficulty is too great for their charity to overcome. This charity alone enabled them—impossible as it appeared on account of the vast concourse of people—to reach the presence of Jesus with the sick man. They went up upon the roof of the house and let down the man sick of the palsy. "Love," as the author of the Imitation truly says, "love feels no burden, regards not labors; it would willingly do more than it is able to do; it pleads not impossibility because it feels sure that it can and may do all things; it attains its goal where he who loves not faints and lies down." (Imit. B. iii. ch. 5.) Would that you and all your Brethren and Sisters were animated by this love, more particularly by this charity towards your sick and suffering fellow men! It is such a natural sentiment that it seems almost incomprehensible how Christian people and pre-eminently Religious, can be devoid of it, for are we not all members of Christ's body? Thus the Apostle expressly declares: "That the members might be mutually careful for one another; if one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it." (I. Cor. xii. 25.) St. Augustine adds these words which we should do well to lay to heart: "Lo, the foot treads upon a thorn. Now what is farther from the foot than the eye? It is far as to distance, but for charity it is very near. For the eye immediately looks for the thorn, the body bends down to the foot, the hand draws out that which made it smart; thus all the members are solicitous for one another and suffer

one with the other.” Where this is not so—ponder the fact well, my soul!—the body is sick or even dead. Show that you are not dead, but full of vitality; show it to-day by performing some deed of kindness towards the sick.

## MONDAY AFTER THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE DEATH OF LAZARUS.

Try to realize the apprehension, the distress, the anxiety that filled the minds of the two sisters at Bethania. Their dearly loved brother Lazarus was seriously ill, they were aware of the danger of his condition; they feared, they felt a presentiment that his illness would end fatally, and alas! the only person to whom they could look with confidence for help and cure was afar off. However, in spite of the distance they sent to Him, they sent a messenger to Jesus to tell Him: “Lord, behold he whom Thou lovest is sick.” (St. John xi. 3.)

**1st.** Consider our Lord’s conduct on the receipt of this message. It is said of Him that He loved the sick man and his two sisters. He knew beforehand that without His succor Lazarus would die. He knew the grief, the sorrow, the bitter woe, the many tears his loss would cause to both the sisters who were so deeply attached to him, and yet what does He do? “When He had heard therefore,” the Evangelist tells us, “that Lazarus was sick, He still remained in the same place two days.” (xi. 6.) Instead of hastening to the relief of His friend, our Lord remains two days longer in the country east of the Jordan. Indifference is not the motive that actuates Him, for our Lord loved the sick man. Higher aims and objects demanded from Him this sacrifice of affection and friendship. The Saviour of mankind would not deprive the multitudes who were in sore need of spiritual instruction, who pressed around Him

hungering and thirsting for salvation, of the spiritual assistance they needed, for the sake of affording a single individual the bodily succor he required. Besides this, other considerations had to be thought of; doubtless His loving, compassionate heart urged Him to spare His friends at Bethania, who had often made Him welcome under their hospitable roof, the affliction that threatened to fall on them; but higher and stronger than the affectionate impulse of His heart was His Father's will, the glory and honor of God, which demanded this delay. Learn of Jesus, my soul, to make personal sacrifices for the sake of higher aims; let the will of God, the glory of God, be first and foremost with you; immolate to them the desires of your heart. And if your affections and your conscience impel you in different directions, if the former urge you to comply with the wishes of your relatives or friends while the latter requires you to make the will of God your single aim, then listen first of all to conscience, obey its voice, however sorely your heart may bleed in consequence.

**2d.** Consider what happened next. Our Lord Himself announces (v. 14) "Lazarus is dead"; a short time before He had made use of a different expression in speaking of the sorrowful event, and announced the sad death of His friend to the disciples in these words: "Lazarus our friend sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." (v. 11.) Our Lord speaks of dying as falling asleep, slumbering, and He terms death a "sleep." In the Saviour's sight, as St. Augustine remarks, His friend was only sleeping; to the eyes of man he was dead. It was no more difficult a matter for Him, the Giver of life, to raise one who was dead to life again than to awaken one who was asleep; moreover death is in reality a sleep for the just, in which as St. John tells us in the Apocalypse (ch. xiv. 13) "they rest from their labors." Pause, and meditate awhile upon this thought. Death is not as the world deems it, complete annihilation,—a dreary, comfortless idea in which however the worldling seems to find consolation—it is not an absorption into empty nothing, a cessation of all existence; no, it is only a short sleep. Our Lord

will awaken us out of this slumber as once upon a time He awoke Lazarus. "With the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God" (I. Thess. iv. 15) we shall one day awake out of this sleep, we shall awake—impress this deeply on your mind—either to eternal day or to everlasting night.

**3d.** Consider the conduct of the two sisters on the occasion of Lazarus' death. St. John tells us that both the sisters, Martha first and then Mary, went to meet our Lord, and falling at His feet they each said: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" (v. 21) and Martha added: "But now also I know that whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee." (v. 22.) What grand words are these! How beautifully they express on the one hand a gentle reproach on the part of the sisters, and on the other hand how forcibly faith speaks in them, the belief that even now the Friend who is endowed with such miraculous powers could do great things if He only would. Listen to and consider what St. Augustine says on this subject: "Martha did not entreat our Lord to raise her brother from the dead, for she did not know whether it would be for his welfare; she only said, I know that Thou canst do this; if Thou wilt, O do it; whether Thou wouldst do well to awaken him, that rests with Thee to decide, for it would be presumption for me to express an opinion." "The two sisters," St. Bernard says, "wept for their departed brother, but they did not implore our Lord to raise him from the dead; and we should do much better if in our prayers we resigned ourselves to the will of God in silence without asking anything definite of Him." Whilst meditating upon the words of these saints, my soul, observe on the one hand the gentle, loving complaint, in which alone these two saintly sisters allowed themselves to manifest their deep regret and grief that our Lord had not come sooner, and on the other hand their no less gentle and timid petition, wherein hopeful faith spoke no less plainly than humble resignation. Finally compare your own behavior under similar circumstances with that of Martha and Mary.

## TUESDAY AFTER THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE RAISING OF LAZARUS FROM THE DEAD.

To-day represent to yourself the grand, the touching scene of which St. John places before us so affecting a picture in his gospel. These are his words: "Jesus therefore, when He saw her (Mary) weeping, and the Jews that were come with her weeping, groaned in the spirit and troubled Himself, and said: Where have you laid him? They say to Him: Lord, come and see." (St. John xi. 33, 34.) The Saviour of mankind, standing before the sepulchre of His friend was touched to the heart, and He wept.

**1st.** Consider the words: "And Jesus wept." (v. 35.) He wept for the same reason as that which caused Martha and Mary to weep, and the Jews who were there present. "Christ," says Rupert, "true to His human nature condescends so far as to shed tears, mourning with those that mourn. He first pays the tribute of affection, the tears of a friend to the man whom He is about, as his God and Lord, to raise from the dead. Perhaps however, our Lord did not shed those tears so much because Lazarus was dead, as for another reason: because, for the sake of a higher and nobler object, in order to strengthen the faith of living persons, He, his divine Friend, felt Himself compelled to call back the dead man once more to the troubles and dangers of this mortal life. This was most probably the reason why Jesus wept. Besides, He participates in the grief of those to whom He had become a brother according to the flesh; altogether the scene before us is a sublime, a deeply affecting one: God the Creator stands weeping at the sepulchre of His creature." This one sentence will afford you abundant matter for meditation. And with such an

example as this before your eyes, you will certainly feel yourself urged more than ever to obey the injunction: "Be not wanting in comforting them that weep and walk with those that mourn." (Ecclus. vii. 38.)

2d. Consider the circumstances attending the raising of Lazarus according to the narrative given us by the Evangelist St. John. He writes: "Jesus therefore again groaning in Himself cometh to the sepulchre." (v. 38.) What, we ask, is meant by this mysterious groaning, this interior trouble our Lord experienced? Transport yourself, my soul, in spirit to the spot at that momentous instant and you will wonder no longer. Jesus is standing before the sepulchre. None can estimate the awful contrast between death and life as He can, who is the Lord of life. No eye can penetrate as His can the depths of that terrible abyss which sin has caused to yawn between heaven and earth, and no one is better acquainted with the mysteries of the tomb, the heartrending sorrows that the grave conceals both for the departed and for those who are left behind. Now, standing before the sepulchre, when the solemn moment has come, the moment of awful import which is to witness a great, an unparalleled miracle, a holy horror thrills through the sacred soul of Jesus. Watch in imagination the accomplishment of this wondrous event—the raising of the dead. See how in spite of Martha's remonstrance, the stone is rolled away, and the rigid corpse of Lazarus—in which decomposition has already begun its work—is revealed to the sight of all. It is a moment of horror, of breathless suspense. There our Lord stands before the tomb in the dignity of His supernatural might; His aspect is indescribably majestic; the eyes of all present are fixed on Him in eager expectancy, He opens His lips and as if an anticipation of that cry which on the last day will awaken all the dead from their graves, He utters the lordly and imperative command: "Lazarus, come forth." And presently, we read, he that had been dead came forth, bound hands and feet with winding bands, and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said to them: "Loose

him and let him go." (v. 44.) Now, my soul, what effect does this affecting, this impressive spectacle produce on you? Can you contemplate it and after all remain cold and unmoved? Alas, if our Lord's commanding summons, which had power to restore new life to Lazarus' remains, fails to stir your heart, the grave in which you lie must indeed be a deep one.

**3d.** Consider the different effect which this miracle had on those who witnessed it. While the two sisters were almost beside themselves with joy and delight and wept for gladness almost as freely as before they wept for sorrow, the Jews who were present did not all share in the pious sisters' joy and happiness. St. John tells us: "Many therefore of the Jews who were come to Martha and Mary, and had seen the things that Jesus did, believed in Him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things that Jesus had done." (v. 45, 46.) This they did, not with a good intention, but, as Origen asserts, in order to stir up the envy and jealousy of the Pharisees; the Ven. Bede also explains the action of those Jews as representing that of certain individuals who see the good works performed by the servants of God and in consequence pursue them with their hatred and seek to calumniate them. Thus this miracle contains two truths, one consolatory and the other the reverse. The exultant joy of the two sisters who but a short time before were plunged in grief, and the faith awakened in the hearts of the Jews who before were unbelievers, will serve to remind you for your consolation of the truth that our Lord is sometimes wont to leave those whom He loves for a time overwhelmed with grief and tribulation, to work their greater gladness later on, and their salvation and that of their friends. And the behavior of the Jews who hastened to the Pharisees sets before you the appalling truth, that through persistent abuse of divine grace, through wilful or perhaps careless opposition to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, a man may go too far, so that at last the most wonderful miracles, the most startling judgments of God, even marvels

of so striking a nature as the raising of the dead, produce no impression on his heart, except in as far as they render it more obdurate. May the former truth prove a comfort to you, the latter serve as a warning.

## WEDNESDAY AFTER THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE MOTHER OF THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE.

Imagine yourself a spectator of the remarkable scene which was enacted when our Lord was going up to Jerusalem. Salome, the devout mother of the apostles John and James, stops our Lord on the way and falls on her knees before Him, as St. Matthew tells us, “adoring and asking something of Him.” (St. Matt. xx. 20.) He said to her: “What wilt thou?” Now listen to and consider the singular request this woman proposed.

1st. “She saith to Him: Say that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand and the other on Thy left, in Thy kingdom.” (v. 21.) Our Lord had already spoken of this journey to Jerusalem as the last that He should take. (v. 18.) Now as it was at Jerusalem that He was to establish His kingdom, which was universally supposed to be a visible, temporal kingdom, and since shortly before in the promises He made to Peter, the Lord had mentioned twelve thrones upon which His apostles were to sit, it can scarcely be thought extraordinary that in her maternal affection this good mother should be desirous of securing for her sons a good position, the foremost places in the new Messianic kingdom. To this petition our Lord simply replied: “You know not what you ask.” God has not reserved for those whom He loves honors and dignities in His kingdom; power and distinction is not their portion, but the very reverse. Had that mother’s request been fulfilled it would not have been the best but the worst thing for her



sons. She knew not what she asked. Reflect upon this truth, my soul. Similar desires, similar longing for honors and positions of high rank are not unfrequently kindled in your heart. All at once your humble position becomes distasteful to you, you would like to be promoted to some higher office. The two talents which you have received from God appear a sorry boon, you wish that you might have five allotted to you. You know not what you ask! If you were endowed with more brilliant talents that would attract the admiration and applause of men, you would perhaps have less of God's approval, for "those who are learned are desirous of appearing and of being called wise," as Thomas à Kempis says. Were you to exchange your humble position for one of more importance, very probably it would have been with you as it was with Saul, who when he followed the calling of a lowly husbandman was so pleasing to God, that He chose him to be king of Israel, and when he wore the crown he became a reprobate. Therefore banish all such vain wishes; be content with the place which God's good providence has assigned you, and remember the words of Holy Scripture: "Who among men is he that can know the counsel of God, or who can think what the will of God is?" (Wisd. ix. 13.)

**2d.** Consider the question with which our Lord answered the prayer of the sons of Zebedee: "Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?" The word chalice is employed in Holy Scripture, St. Jerome tells us, in the sense of suffering; for instance in Psalm cxv. it is said: "I will take the chalice of salvation" and immediately after the meaning of that chalice is given, for the Psalmist adds: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." (Ps. cxv. 15.) St. Chrysostom asserts that all are thereby to understand that no one can reign with Christ unless he follows Him in His Passion. And thus our Lord proclaims the great truth, that in His kingdom no one will receive a crown of gold who has not previously worn the crown of thorns; that no man will be permitted to sit with Him upon His throne in Heaven

who has not previously been nailed with Him to the cross of shame; that a triumphal entry into the heavenly Jerusalem awaits no one who has not trodden the way of the cross in the earthly Sion. The two sons of Zebedee apprehended our Lord's meaning instantly. They joyfully responded: "We can," and they were as good as their word; this they proved later on by their deeds, when John was cast into the cauldron of boiling oil, and James was the first of the apostles to shed his blood as a martyr. Thus they fulfilled their promise; why then do you hesitate, and shrink from showing yourself faithful in keeping your vows? It behooves you also as a Christian, as a Priest, as a Religious; to drink the chalice our Lord drank. "Thou camest hither to serve," we are told in the Imitation of Christ, "not to rule; know that thou art called to suffer and to labor." (B. i. ch. 17.) You too once answered with joy: "We can." Up then, redeem your promise, and rejoice to drink the chalice of the Lord if you desire to be His friend and a partaker with Him.

**3d.** Consider the description Christ gives of His kingdom. When the other ten apostles, who were no less ambitious than the sons of Zebedee, were moved with indignation against the two brethren, He called them to Him, and said: "You know that the princes of the Gentiles lord it over them, and they that are the greater exercise power upon them. It shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister, and he that will be first among you shall be your servant. Even as the Son of man is not come to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a redemption for many." (v. 25-28.) Ponder upon these words of our Lord, my soul, endeavor to apprehend their full signification; they are wondrous words, such as never were uttered by human lips since the world was made. They are diametrically opposed to all the views and aspirations of the natural man. Man's instinct is to rule, and without government, without a head and ruler the kingdom of Christ cannot subsist. But whilst the chiefs of

the heathen, and rulers who are like-minded with the heathen, delight in authority for its own sake, in Christ's kingdom every office, every dignity entails the service of others, the surrender of self, the sacrifice of one's powers, one's life for the good of one's subordinates and for the glory of God. The supreme ruler in Christ's kingdom, the Sovereign Pontiff, is the "Servant of the servants of God"; and the General of an Order, the Superior of all, styles himself the general minister, i.e., the one who is at the service of all. Let every one who is in authority regard himself or herself as the servant, the handmaid of the Brethren or Sisters, and follow the rule laid down by the author of the Imitation: "He ought to be so far contented as to be willing to be the least as another would wish to be the greatest; and to enjoy as much peace and content in the lowest place as in the highest, and to be as willing to be despicable and mean and of no name and repute, as to be preferred in honor and greater in the world than others." (B. iii. ch. 22.) This ought to be the rule in every Religious House, but every rule has exceptions, and perhaps you are an exception in this instance. Alas for you if so it is!

## THURSDAY AFTER THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE CONVERSION OF ZACHEUS.

To-day, my soul, you are invited to accompany the Saviour somewhat further on this, His last journey up to Jerusalem. This journey was marked by a great number of miracles which Jesus wrought. Consequently vast multitudes of people streamed from all sides to see the great Thaumaturgus, to listen to His teaching, to invoke His assistance; and amongst the incidents that took place on the way was the remarkable meeting with Zacheus. When

our Lord drew near to the city of Jericho where Zacheus, the wealthy chief of the publicans resided, St. Luke tells us that this man heard that He was entering in and was desirous to see Him.

1st. "He sought to see Jesus who He was, and he could not for the crowd, because he was low of stature. And running before, he climbed up into a sycamore tree that he might see Him, for He was to pass that way. And when Jesus was come to the place, looking up, He saw him, and said to him: Zacheus, make haste and come down; for this day I must abide in thy house." (St. Luke xix. 3-6.) Zacheus, a man of short stature, that is to say of little faith, is desirous only to see Jesus, and behold, more than this is vouchsafed to him, more than he had thought or ventured to hope for, the joy and blessedness of receiving into his house the Saviour of men and with Him His salvation! So infinite is our Lord's goodness, so bountifully and generously does He meet the least advances on the part of an unhappy sinner; He passes by no one in whom He perceives the least spark of good will. What a consolatory truth for you, my soul! But mark this: our Lord makes one stipulation, He imposes one condition upon Zacheus if He is to enter beneath his roof. He calls to him: "Make haste and come down." He must descend from the tree upon which he climbed at the cost of much pains in order thence to obtain a view of Him who brought salvation, if Jesus is to be his guest. The tree in question was a fig-tree. The trunk is tall and rugged, the branches spread out wide and the fruit it bears is sweet to the taste. Now with the purpose of seeking welfare and happiness, many men give themselves much trouble in climbing into the lofty fig-tree, that represents pride; they hide themselves in its leafy branches, that is, they are absorbed in avaricious pursuit of temporal riches, and finally greedily crave for the fruit of the tree, the indulgence of the senses. O Zacheus, make haste and come down; come down from the heights of pride, come down from the thick foliage of the tree of avarice, come down from the tree whose luscious fruit your sensual nature

covets; come down, or otherwise Christ cannot enter into and abide in your house.

**2d.** Consider Zacheus' conduct upon hearing the words our Lord addressed to him. "And he made haste and came down and received Him with joy. And when all saw it they murmured, saying that He was gone to be a guest with a man that was a sinner. But Zacheus standing, said to the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have wronged any man of anything, I restore him fourfold." (St. Luke xix. 6-8.) Observe the marvellous effects of divine grace. When Zacheus hears Jesus' voice he is filled with holy joy, and as soon as he finds himself in His presence, his heart, before so cold and money-loving, is changed; he feels the bitterest, deepest compunction for his sins, he is ready to give up everything to which formerly he clung with his whole heart, he is resolved to make reparation, nay fourfold reparation for all that he has gained unjustly. O wondrous power of our Lord's grace! And yet how often this same miracle is wrought, how often we see a sinner all at once transformed as Zacheus was; the licentious become chaste, the miserly become liberal, those who before were tepid are inflamed with fervor and zeal. All this grace will effect, if only you correspond a little with it; all this our Lord will operate in your heart if you do but desire like Zacheus to see Him. Alas, perhaps you do not even do this little that is required of you!

**3d.** Consider our Lord's words: "This day is salvation come to this house." For in this house, St. Chrysologus remarks, Zacheus receives Jesus and is received by Him; he sets before his guest temporal refreshments and is refreshed by Him with spiritual graces. This that happened in Zacheus' house occurs in every house in which God makes His dwelling-place, in which Christ takes up His abode, in every Catholic church. As in His condescending loving kindness the God made man entered into the house of a man who was a sinner, went to abide with Zacheus, so He does in every church; and the same joy, the same exultation which prevailed in Zacheus' house in conse-

quence of the Saviour's presence there reigns here, where He continually dwells; the same plenitude of graces which was poured out on Zacheus' household is given in the church to all, whether just or sinners, who are assembled there around the throne whence the Most High dispenses His favors. This is the reason why this Gospel is read in the Mass for the dedication of churches.

Look into your own heart, O reader, and ask yourself whether the consoling, elevating truths contained in this Gospel apply to you; whether you are in reality a spiritual temple, a mystic sanctuary of the Most High God. If this is not so, if salvation has not come to your house, acknowledge that you are yourself to blame for this; the fault lies with you, not with Him who could say of Himself: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (v. 10.)

## FRIDAY AFTER THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE PASSION OF CHRIST AS THE CAUSE OF OUR JOY.

The return of Friday recalls to our mind the admonition of the seraphic Father, St. Francis: "I pray you, Brethren, keep the Passion of Jesus Christ ever before your sight." In loyal obedience to this precept fix your eyes to-day upon the cross. Imagine yourself to be standing with John beneath that cross, kneeling with Magdalen at the foot of that cross, whereon the Saviour of mankind is shedding His blood and suffering intense agony. Meanwhile consider the following truths:

**1st.** Our Lord hangs upon the cross naked, covered with blood and consumed by intolerable thirst. Alas! He who clothes the lilies of the field, who adorns them with a beauty surpassing that of Solomon in all his regal magnificence and glory; He who decks the earth with a verdant

vesture and gives warm covering to the beasts; He who counts it as done to Himself if one clothes the naked, He hangs upon the cross with no other garment to protect His quivering limbs and conceal them from the rude gaze of the soldiers than blood and wounds. Nor is this all. He who moistens and refreshes the face of the earth with the dews of heaven and vivifying rain; He who created countless springs and streams at which the creatures He made can quench their thirst; He who promises the bliss of Heaven as the reward of a cup of cold water given to the thirsty, He, hanging on the cross, utters that piteous cry: "I thirst." Yet not a drop of water is given Him to still His distressing thirst. Weep, my soul, weep over the pain your God endures, yet weep tears of gratitude, for behold, His sufferings are the cause of your joy. If our Lord did not hang stripped and naked upon the cross, you could not enter into the kingdom of Heaven clad in the wedding garment; did He not suffer this thirst upon Calvary, it would be one day your fate to cry with the unhappy Dives: "Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." (St. Luke xvi. 24.)

**2d.** Consider your Lord, as in utter weariness and exhaustion He hangs upon the cross. Alas! He who spoke those loving words: "Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened and I will refresh you" (St. Matt. xi. 28), He who when returning home with His disciples at the close of a long day spent in preaching the Gospel, was wont of His kindness to retire to a solitary place where they could rest; He who made the tranquil night and caused the sun to withdraw its light in order that men and beasts might enjoy undisturbed repose and recruit their forces in sleep; He is driven and goaded up to Golgotha, like a harried victim of the chase. Words fail to describe His prostration after all He had gone through—the bloody sweat upon the Mount of Olives, the cruel scourging, the fatigue of being dragged from one tribunal to another, of traversing the hard and toilsome way of the

cross on which He fell to the ground so many times. And when you now see Him who according to the assertion of the prophet "giveth strength to the weary and increaseth force and might to them that are not" (Is. xl. 29), if you see Him who upholds the heavens and the earth, hanging in weariness and exhaustion on the cross, weep, my soul, over your Lord in His deadly languor, but weep tears of gratitude. For His weakness is your strength; His weariness and fatigue will purchase for you celestial refreshment and eternal repose, the rest which the Saviour has promised to us all; and you will owe it to Him alone if the appalling words of the Apocalypse are not fulfilled in your case: "Neither have they rest day nor night." (Ap. xiv. 11.)

**3d.** Consider your Lord, as in fearful sadness and distress He hangs upon the cross. Alas! He who created the light, in whose clear radiance all creatures, angels and men rejoice, hangs on the cross on Golgotha shrouded in weird and gloomy darkness; He of whom Isaiah said: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord and my soul shall be joyful in my God" (lxi. 10), He who formerly reigned in Heaven in bliss unspeakable, now hangs upon the cross in anguish and desolation so terrible that He no longer exclaims as upon Mount Olivet: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death," but a yet more heartrending cry of grief escapes His pallid lips and resounds amid the dismal darkness: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Weep, my soul, weep over the anguish of your Saviour, but weep tears of gratitude, for it is to His sadness and sorrow that you will owe it if the eternal felicity of Heaven is your portion; you must ascribe it solely to His dereliction and distress if you are not compelled one day, in eternal banishment from the presence of God, to utter the grievous plaint: "Into how much tribulation am I come, and into what floods of sorrow, wherein I now am." (I. Mach. vi. 11.) Thus it is that Christ's bitter Passion is the cause of your joy, or at least it can be and ought to be so; for—mark this well—if in spite of all He did and suffered for you you are among the lost, the remembrance of



what might have been your salvation will greatly aggravate the torments of hell.

## SATURDAY AFTER THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AS SHE IS DEPICTED BY THE  
EVANGELISTS.

On this day, which is specially dedicated to our Blessed Lady, place before your mental vision that most holy, most pure, most lowly of virgins. One may well imagine the sight of her to have been beautiful indeed, filling one with rapture, inspiring one with holy thoughts, if the mere mention of her name, the mere thought of her sublime and exalted personality is so touching and impressive, so attractive, encouraging and delightful. Let us now contemplate this heavenly being as she is depicted in the holy Gospels.

1st. Consider that at the earliest mention of Mary, when the Evangelist St. Luke first sets her before us, we find her employed in the most sacred and exalted occupation in which a human being can engage, that is in prayer. "In the sixth month the Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary." (St. Luke i. 26, 27.) Tradition says that the messenger of the Most High found Mary in a lonely chamber praying, for angels visit men at the time of prayer. And no sooner has the Evangelist shown us the Blessed Virgin holding sacred intercourse with the angel, than he proceeds to give an account of her visit to Elizabeth; and again you behold the Blessed Virgin in holy rapture, inspired by the spirit of devotion and prayer; you hear her exclaim in the words of that canticle of praise, ever to be admired for its beauty and sublimity:

“My soul doth magnify the Lord.” Then later on, when her divine Infant was born, and the shepherds and wise men came to worship Him, hear what the Evangelist says of Mary: “But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart” (ch. ii. 19), that is to say in tranquil contemplation she meditated upon them, meditated upon the wondrous mysteries that were accomplished in her. Impress deeply upon your mind the grand image here presented to you of the Blessed Virgin; you behold her engaged in prayer, magnifying God, meditating on the mysteries of religion. As she is here depicted make her your model; see that you are before all else given to prayer, to praise, to contemplation. That is the chief requisite of the Christian, pre-eminently of the Priest and Religious. Listen to what St. Ignatius says on this point. “What we value most in a Religious is not his vast erudition, his talents as a preacher, nor any other of the natural gifts and abilities which distinguish him as a man, but his humility, his obedience, his spirit of recollection and of prayer.” Good works, blessed Brother Giles was wont to say, are an ornament to the soul, but nothing enlightens it and beautifies it like the spirit of prayer. Ask yourself to what extent do you imitate the most holy Virgin in her love of prayer? At any rate make a resolution to-day to perform your accustomed orisons with a devotion resembling hers.

**2d.** Consider how the Blessed Virgin Mary is also depicted to us by the Evangelist as the lowly, obedient handmaid of the Lord, perfectly resigned to the will of God. The angel of the Most High promises her a dignity in which as much prospective suffering as honor is involved, and Mary, no less humble than submissive to the divine decree, makes no other response than the memorable words: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word.” Again, when Elizabeth salutes her as “blessed among women” in her humility she immediately gives this praise to Him to whom alone all glory is due, and exclaims joyously: “My soul doth magnify the Lord.” And subsequently to the birth of the

Redeemer, see how unflinchingly, with what exemplary resignation she accepts the dolors Simeon predicts are in store for her, and afterwards, how unresistingly, how uncomplainingly she acquiesces in that most painful behest of the angel: "Take the Child and His Mother and fly into Egypt." (St. Matt. ii. 13.) If, my soul, you follow the wondrous life of Mary step by step, you will everywhere and always observe in her the same characteristics. Whether sorrowingly she searches for the Child Jesus lost in Jerusalem, or whether our Lord, on being told: "Behold Thy Mother stands without" (St. Matt. xii. 47), from higher, supernatural motives pays no heed to her, she is ever the same, the handmaid of the Lord, submissive to the divine will, accepting everything in silence and patience, until finally she stands beneath the cross, the model for all Christians of pious submission to the will of God. Learn then of Mary to practise this second virtue, which so well becomes the Christian and especially Priests and Religious: resignation to the will of God and lowly obedience. Since it is your chief, your life-long task, to reflect in your life the life of Jesus, and since His life was nothing else than the fulfilment of His heavenly Father's will, O learn of Mary this art! "Learn," as Thomas à Kempis bids you, "learn to obey, O dust; learn to humble thyself, O earth and clay, learn to break thy own will," for as St. Bonaventure declares, the perfection of a good Religious consists in the entire renunciation of his own will in order to follow the will of another.

**3d.** Consider Mary's conduct in connection with an incident to which your attention has not yet been directed, narrated by St. John in his gospel. "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the Mother of Jesus was there. . . . And the wine failing, the Mother of Jesus said to Him: They have no wine." (St. John ii. 1, 3.) Here behold and admire another virtue which stands forth brightly in Mary: charity to her neighbor, her attribute as intercessor for the afflicted. This third virtue, so grand in itself, so rich in blessings for man, which surrounds the name of Mary with a halo of great-

ness, which makes it sweet to the ear, a source of infinite graces to man, was first made conspicuous at this nuptial feast; and since then Mary has never ceased to be the loving Mother of the afflicted, the Help of Christians, the Refuge of sinners, the Health of the sick. In the first point you saw and admired Mary at her own devotions; now admire her in her character of intercessor for others; in the second point you beheld with amazement the wondrous resignation of the handmaid of the Lord; now contemplate her with joy showing herself ready for God's sake to serve and help all mankind in their necessities. Learn of Mary not merely to pray for yourself but to intercede for others, not merely to endure your own sufferings with resignation but lovingly to help others to bear their afflictions; thus your prayers, your submission to the will of God, will be more profitable to yourself, more fruitful for others. By being constant in prayer, given to holy contemplation after Mary's example; by resigning as she did your own will in all things, and by active exertion such as hers was in the service of your neighbor, you will attain the ideal of a Priest and of a Religious, and by this means you will practise better than in any other way the devotion to our Blessed Lady which the Seraphic St. Francis so emphatically enjoined on all his sons and daughters.

## THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE CALLING OF MANY AND THE ELECTION OF FEW.

Imagine yourself to be present when our Lord relates the beautiful parable of the Great Supper, a parable which contains sweet and consoling thoughts, as well as sad and serious truths. Listen, and observe with what impressive solemnity the Saviour utters the memorable words: "Many are called, but few are chosen." (St. Matt.

xxii. 14.) Let this truth form the subject of your meditation to-day.

**1st.** Consider this utterance of our Lord in reference to the vocation to His Church. In very truth many are called, called to enter the one fold of Jesus Christ, called to take part in the marriage feast that is prepared for them there. Who can attempt to count them, to form an estimate of the millions in whose ears this call has sounded since the death of Christ for our redemption? How innumerable are the multitudes who were privileged to be born and brought up in the bosom of the Church wherein alone salvation is to be found! How many are the messengers of the Christian faith who since the time of the apostles have gone out into all lands, to proclaim the divine message: "All things are ready, come ye to the marriage." (v. 4.) Well may the Apostle ask in wonder: "Have they not heard? Yes, verily," he adds, "their sound hath gone forth into all the earth and their words into the ends of the whole world." (Rom. x. 18.) Yet how many hear that call, and like the invited guests in the Gospel, do not obey it! Thousands, nay millions remain in the darkness of heathendom, in the semi-obscurity of error. And even amongst those who enter into the hall where the marriage feast is held, only a small proportion always retain the wedding garment of innocence and the ornament of good works, as Ven. Bede sorrowfully laments. Look at the thousands of Christians, of those who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, who spend their lives as if such words as these had never been written: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, luxury, idolatry, witchcrafts, emulations, wraths, quarrels, dissensions, sects, envies, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like. Of the which I foretell you, as I have foretold to you, that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God." (Eph. v. 19-21.) Deeds like these are in fact committed not only by unbelievers, but by those who profess to be Christians. No wonder therefore that our Lord should say:

“Many are called, but few are chosen.” Consider earnestly that since by God’s grace you are among the *many*, you may be also amongst the *few* if only you seriously will and desire it.

2d. Consider this utterance of our Lord in reference to the vocation to your particular calling, above all to the sacerdotal and Religious state. God has ordained everything in the order of nature as well as in the supernatural order, assigning to every creature his appointed place, his appointed aim; and can it be thought that He would not arrange man’s sphere of action in the same way? If worlds, whole systems of worlds move in the order God has decreed and the orbits He has assigned them, will He not have ordained the destiny of so insignificant a creature as man? Indeed so it is. In all human affairs God’s will is supreme; He wills to place one here, the other there; to this one He gives certain proclivities and talents for a definite purpose, to another for a different object He gives abilities of a diverse nature. And this He does in order that man may be at liberty of his own free will to acquiesce in the divine will, and may in that manner attain the end and object of his existence when and how God wills. In this way “many are called”; they are provided by God with all that they require to enable them to fulfil their destiny in their life here below and to attain happiness in doing so. But alas! “few are chosen.” Many wilfully go counter to the will of God, and for their own selfish ends they choose a vocation for which God has not qualified them. Again many who are called and have obeyed the call, who like yourself have embraced the sacerdotal or the Religious state, which one of the saints compares to a ship wherein one can sail with comparative ease over the stormy ocean of life into the harbor of eternal felicity, many such persons do not belong to the “few who are chosen” to a high degree of holiness. What is the reason of this? It is because they do not persevere, because they are not what they ought to be; because they “have left their first charity.”

(Ap. ii. 4.) I do not consider it to be a very great thing, remarks Brother Giles, if a man finds a means of obtaining access to the court of the king; but I do consider it a great thing if he conducts himself there as etiquette requires, and remains modest and unassuming. Now the Religious life is the court of the heavenly Monarch; it is no difficult matter to gain admittance to it, but it is a very different matter to lead an exemplary life in the cloister, to persevere in it in all humility until death. Thus to monks and nuns our Lord's saying applies: "Many are called but few are chosen."

3d. Consider how this utterance of our Lord ought to be a caution to you, but ought not to terrify you. It is intended to warn you against presumption, carelessness, indifference. If you knew that an epidemic had broken out which proved fatal to a great number, and which few could altogether escape, you would take due precautions against it. Why therefore do you not do the same in regard to this danger? On the other hand you must not allow yourself to be too much alarmed by the words: "Few are chosen," for you have every reason to hope that you will be among the number of these, remembering that the Apostle says: "God will have all men to be saved" (I. Tim. ii. 4); nay, you ought to hope it for you are a free agent, and God will not condemn any one unless through his own fault. Besides think of the many means of grace within your reach; think of your frequent Communions, the countless opportunities you have of hearing Mass; in short of the plenitude of graces which God bestows on you, and you cannot fail to acknowledge that it certainly is not His fault if you do not belong to the few that are chosen. Rouse yourself then, my soul. You are called, see to it that you are also chosen, and that when you find yourself upon your death-bed you may also be provided with the wedding-garment, like the pious Capuchin Angelus of Tolosa, who uttered these words with his last breath: "I have reason to give thanks to God for having created me, for having called me to be a Christian and

a Catholic, for having given me a vocation to the Seraphic Order and for granting me the privilege of dying as a Capuchin monk."

## MONDAY AFTER THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE MANNER IN WHICH THE PHARISEES PLOTTED AGAINST OUR LORD.

Take your place in imagination in the council-chamber of the chief priests and Pharisees. They have just received the information that Jesus has raised Lazarus from the dead. This miracle was so great, so striking, and so undeniable, that even they were compelled to admit the fact. Now consider the course of action they adopt under these circumstances.

1st. "The chief priests therefore and the Pharisees gathered a council, and said: What do we, for this man doth many miracles?" (St. John xi. 47.) "They did not say," as St. Augustine remarks in answer to their question, "let us too believe in Him! On the contrary in the malice of their unregenerate hearts they took counsel together how they could injure and ruin Him, not considering that they might gain salvation for themselves. 'If we let Him alone so, all will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away our place and nation.' (v. 48.) They were afraid lest they should lose what was temporal and never gave a thought to life eternal, yet after all they lost both the one and the other." Ponder this saying of the great Doctor of the Church; not only is it true in this case, but we constantly see it exemplified in the world around. Then consider this truth: Our Lord's enemies lay stress upon His being dangerous to the State, and declare His teaching to have an injurious effect upon the people. In reality the very contrary was the true state of things. Christ's kingdom is not of this



world and His labor was for the welfare and salvation of all men. The Pharisees, blinded by hatred, called white black, took light for darkness, and to gratify their ill-will, did not hesitate to resort to lies and calumny. Is it only the Pharisees who act thus? Look round in the world and you will see the same war waged against Christ and His Church, and again on a smaller scale you find the same course of conduct pursued by individuals in regard to their fellow-men, you meet with those whose hearts are filled with similar sentiments of hatred and envy. You will do well to examine yourself also in this respect.

2d. "But one of them named Caiphas, being the high priest that year, said to them: You know nothing, neither do you consider that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." (v: 49, 50.) The words Caiphas uttered in a bad sense, it is expedient that one man should die for the whole people, had a far deeper and wider meaning than the speaker had any idea of; it was a solemn and consoling prophecy of the sacrifice of atonement that was shortly to be offered for the people, not merely for the Jews but for the Gentiles also, as the apostle adds in the 52d verse: "And not only for the nation, but to gather together in one the children of God that were dispersed." Here we may admire the marvellous wisdom of God. The Jews were assembled to plot a base murder, but the verdict of death, the sentence passed upon our Lord out of sheer hatred, was couched in language which expressed in singularly brief terms the actual and higher object of our Lord's death, and announced the great truth that His death of atonement would rescue all from eternal death, and gather together all the scattered children of God to form one family under their heavenly Father. Yes, Caiphas was right when he prophesied that Jesus should die for the people, should die to save us from death, should die to deliver us out of the power of the devil, should die in order to gather together in one the children of God that were

dispersed. Ponder these weighty truths before proceeding further.

**3d.** Consider that the Evangelist tells us: "This he spoke not of himself, but being the high priest of that year, he prophesied." (v. 51.) It was not as if Caiphas himself was worthy to be chosen as the mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost for the people of Israel; he only prophesied because he held the office of high priest that particular year. Thus we see that to his high office he owed it that he spoke through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in spite of his own personal unworthiness. How much matter for reflection this truth gives you, my soul, how it teaches you the distinction that exists and which ought to be observed between the office and the office-bearer, between the Priest in his private and in his ministerial capacity; how it warns you to hold the sacerdotal dignity in the greatest respect, never to lower it in any way, if you are yourself a Priest, never to speak slightly of it, if you are a layman. For if the dignity of the sacerdotal state under the Old Dispensation is so strikingly made manifest in this passage of Holy Scripture, what ought we not to think of the priesthood of the New Covenant? "So great," says St. Chrysostom, "is the dignity to which the Priest is raised, that it is as if he had already been admitted into Heaven, as if he were raised to a higher level than that of human nature, as if he were set free from the trammels of the weaknesses of ordinary mortals." Ought the thought of this to make you proud, you who are a Priest? Oh no, it ought rather to make you fear and tremble, for—as the same saint adds—you have launched out upon the ocean of your sacred office, one in which those who make shipwreck do not fall into the sea, but into an abyss of misery where they meet with a death that does not separate soul and body, but delivers both soul and body to everlasting torments. You have before your eyes the example of Caiphas; let his fate be a warning to you!

## TUESDAY AFTER THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON OUR LORD'S FLIGHT FROM HIS ENEMIES.

In the council the resolution was taken to compass our Lord's death at any cost. This decision, which was prompted by no good motive, was the greatest blessing to the world; it was the world's salvation, as we saw yesterday. It was to carry out this decree, in reality to die for the people that Jesus had come down from Heaven, and now when the time had come for action—listen to what St. John narrates:

1st. "Wherefore Jesus walked no more openly among the Jews, but He went into a country near the desert, into a city that is called Ephrem, and there He abode with His disciples." (St. John xi. 54.) Thus our Lord fled from His enemies and concealed Himself from them, not because He lacked the power, as St. Augustine remarks, to go about openly among the Jews had He so wished without sustaining any injury from them, but for the purpose of giving His disciples an example, an example of complete submission to the will of God. His hour was not yet come; He was not to lay down His life then, but at the paschal time; that was the will of the Father and consequently it was also the will of the Son. Would that we had this example always before our eyes! How often the desire awakens within us to perform great and good works, works that are for the glory of God! how often we feel ourselves to possess the power to accomplish something beyond the ordinary at some special place, or in some particular post! how often are we actuated by the best motives, guided by the purest intentions in our undertakings! And yet what we do proves a failure, God's blessing does not rest upon it. The hour for that particular work was not yet come. God did not desire this service of you, or He

did not desire it at that time, in that place. Why did you consult your own ideas, your own will, rather than the will of God? Why did you apply yourself to the work—excellent as it was in itself—with such impetuosity, without due deliberation, instead—to quote the beautiful words of the Imitation—instead of entering like Moses into the tabernacle to consult the Lord and implore the divine assistance? “For Josue and the children of Israel, as thou readest, were therefore deceived by the Gabaonites, because they did not first ask counsel from the mouth of the Lord, but trusting too easily to fair words, were deluded with counterfeit piety.” (Imit. B. iii. ch. 38.)

**2d.** Consider another reason why our Lord concealed Himself from His adversaries. Origen, the great Father of the Church, states it when he says: “It is an honorable thing for a man at a time of persecution, if he is required to confess Christ, not to shrink from suffering death for the truth; but it is no less praiseworthy to avoid giving occasion for such a trial, not only because of the doubtfulness of the issue as far as he himself is concerned, but also in order not to give others the opportunity of committing another of their impious deeds.” Thus by His flight from His enemies our Lord designed to teach us that without necessity, without some higher end, without knowing it to be God’s will, we should never rashly expose ourselves to danger either of body or soul; not only on our own account—for we know that he who courts danger lightly succumbs to it—but also for the sake of our neighbor, whom we keep from sin by placing ourselves beyond the reach of his active hatred and rage. Be assured that in taking flight as our Lord did, there is not unfrequently more virtue than in engaging in conflict rashly, and without absolute necessity. For instance, by going out of your adversary’s way, even if you are conscious that you are completely his superior, and have every reason to hope that his derision and calumnious accusations would not overcome your patience, but only serve to increase your merit, you exercise three distinct virtues. For at one and the same time you practise humility, since you do not trust

too much to your own strength; you practise charity to your neighbor, because you preserve him from sin, and finally you practise charity towards God, inasmuch as you prevent an offence against His majesty. Remember this, my soul, and for the future under similar circumstances follow our Lord's example.

**3d.** Consider what the apostle proceeds to relate: "But the chief priests and Pharisees had given a commandment, that if any one knew where He was, he should tell, that they might apprehend Him." (v. 56.) Oh what malice, what hardness of heart these men display! Our Lord eludes their rage, for the purpose of allowing them time to desist from their guilty design—it is none other than decide—but they do not understand the purport of that season of grace, on the contrary they choose that very time to give orders that Jesus should be forcibly dragged from the hiding-place to which He withdrew for their benefit. Now consider what is the most shocking thing of all; the chief priests and Pharisees were almost immediately to celebrate the solemnities of the Passover, for the festival was near at hand. What a preparation was theirs for the sacred feast! "Those in whom the greatest devotion was to be looked for," writes St. Chrysostom, "we find planning the greatest of crimes. At the time when they commemorate their own deliverance from bondage, they do their utmost to arrest one who is perfectly innocent." But instead of glowing with indignation at the conduct of these misguided men, pause, my soul, and reflect whether you do not act in a similar manner. Alas! when going up to the altar or to Holy Communion, at the most hallowed moment, that is, do you not sometimes entertain the most unhallowed thoughts and wishes in your breast? While preaching on the love of God, does not your heart ever burn with envy and aversion? When arrayed in a vestment of white—the garb of innocence—are you not inwardly defiled by evil thoughts, and while you go about wearing the habit of a monk, are not you—little as this might be expected of you—the prey of vainer cares and anxieties than seculars are? "Those in whom the greatest sanctity

is to be looked for, prepare themselves for the greatest of crimes," St. Chrysostom said in reference to the Jewish Priests and Scribes, and how frequently the same might be said of Christian Priests and Religious. Where one might expect to meet with the greatest sanctity, devotion and charity one sometimes finds the least!

## WEDNESDAY AFTER THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE ANOINTING OF OUR LORD'S FEET BY MARY MAGDALEN.

Represent to yourself to-day the remarkable scene which took place in the house of Simon the leper in Bethania, shortly before our Lord's entry into Jerusalem. St. John describes it as follows: "And they made Him a supper there, and Martha served; but Lazarus was one of them that were at table with Him. Mary therefore took a pound of ointment of right spikenard, of great price, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair, and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment." (St. John xii. 2-4.) Be present in spirit at this singular anointing whilst you make your meditation on the subject.

**1st.** Observe the gratitude of the two sisters Martha and Mary for the raising of their brother Lazarus. Martha showed her gratitude by serving the Lord at table; by not leaving this duty to the servants, as Theophylact observes, but waiting upon Him in person out of reverence. Mary went further, for she poured a precious unguent over His head and feet. It was considered a mark of special friendliness and hospitality, one of which our Lord felt the absence in the house of Simon the Pharisee, when the feet of the guests were merely washed; but to anoint the head and feet of a guest with ointment of spikenard so costly

that the disciples estimated its value at fully three hundred pence (over fifty dollars), and then to wipe the parts anointed not with a cloth but with her own hair, was something quite exceptional. Our Lord Himself did not conceal His surprise at so striking a mark of veneration, of love and of gratitude; He exclaimed: "Amen I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which she hath done shall be told for a memory of her." (St. Matt. xxvi. 13.) May this not have been told in vain for you! Have you less for which to thank Jesus than those two sisters had? How often He has lovingly entered into your house, how often He has called you, when spiritually dead, to life again, how often He has cast out the evil spirit from you as He did from Mary. And how have you shown your thankfulness? Alas! not to speak of Mary's memorable act you do not even serve Him as Martha did, you are not, as she was, a grateful handmaid of the Lord in your vocation.

**2d.** Consider how Mary broke the alabaster box of ointment and poured it all to the very last drop upon our Lord's head and feet. In like manner, my soul, you ought, in your love and gratitude, to break your heart in sorrow and contrition, you ought to break your self-will, your self-love by bodily and spiritual mortification, and then giving to Jesus your whole and undivided self, to pour out your soul in holy aspirations and fervent desires. That is the manner in which you ought to anoint our Lord's head with precious ointment of spikenard. But if you would anoint His feet also do not rest satisfied with giving your whole heart to Him with all its affections, wholly and solely in pious devotion, self-denial and mortification, but bethink yourself of what the God-fearing Alcuin says: "By the head Christ Himself is signified; by the feet are signified the poor, who are His members." Not therefore until you unite charity to your neighbor with charity towards God, not until over and above the oblations which you offer to God, you remember to bestow alms both temporal and spiritual upon His brethren the poor, can you be said truly to imitate Mary in her piety. Let it be your

resolution to-day never to let a day pass without in this mystic manner anointing our Lord's head and feet.

**3d.** Consider that the Evangelist records that "the house was filled with the odor of the ointment." Two thoughts here present themselves for your meditation. According to the explanation given by St. Cyril of Alexandria the fragrant odor of the ointment which pervaded the whole house signifies how soon after this incident had taken place, when the sacred and immaculate body of Christ like an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard had been broken in His Passion, the celestial perfume of His doctrine and His grace would fill the whole house, that is, the whole Church. Or again the sweet odor of this ointment may be regarded as emblematic of the sweet odor of good works, which, performed by individual members of a family, of a Community, of the Church, like ointment of spikenard fill the whole house with their fragrance, i.e., they serve for the edification of others, for a good example to their brethren. And if you take for granted that the Mary in question was the same as Magdalen, formerly a sinner, observe how that which in times past was employed in gratification of her sensuality and vanity, is now literally appropriated to the service of God; and that which once was, as the Apostle says, to many "the odor of death unto death," that is to say gave scandal to many, is now "the odor of life unto life" (II. Cor. ii. 16) a good example for all to whom it is known. With what valuable suggestions and admonitions these considerations will furnish you, my soul. Lay them to heart, and ask yourself whether you fill the house where you are with the sweet odor of your good works. Or are you perhaps an odor of death unto death to those around you on account of the bad example you give? .



## THURSDAY AFTER THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE SCANDAL WHICH THE DISCIPLES TOOK AT THE ANOINTING OF OUR LORD BY MARY.

Realize as vividly as you can the impression produced upon the guests who witnessed Mary's anointing of Jesus. Whereas the astonishment, at first general, changed in the case of some into admiration for the warm love and veneration Mary displayed for our Lord, others, Judas in particular, possessed by an uncharitable spirit, judged that noble act most harshly. "And the disciples seeing it, had indignation, saying: To what purpose is this waste? For this might have been sold for much, and given to the poor." (St. Matt. xxvi. 9, 10.)

**1st.** The disciples were indignant. St. Augustine expresses the opinion that the spiritual meaning of this unction was still hidden, and their ignorance of it led the disciples to blame the act. But it was Judas first of all, who, incited by avarice, uttered that venomous sentence, and the other apostles fell in with his verdict apparently with a good intention and out of charity towards the poor. Here we have before us the two principal causes of rash, uncharitable judgments. The cause is either to be looked for in the speaker's own malice, as in the case of Judas, or in a mistaken view of things, as in the case of the other apostles. St. Thomas of Aquin says that rash judgments are the outcome of inward depravity. Because we judge others by ourselves we are ready to credit our neighbor with what we perceive in ourselves. An upright and virtuous soul puts a good construction on everything, but the soul that is devoid of virtue puts the worst interpretation on all actions and poisons all it touches. Wherefore since on the one hand we see that spitefulness is the cause of uncharitable judgments, how careful you ought

to be to avoid them, and if on the other hand such judgments originate frequently from erroneous views or ignorance of the real facts, how cautious you are bound to be in judging your brother, you who are so prone to error! Yes, for the reasons given above beware not only of rash judgment, but beware of cherishing mere suspicion, for that has been termed the poison of friendship, and St. Bonaventure declares it to be a secret and fatal pestilence, which banishes God from the soul and is destructive to brotherly love.

**2d.** Consider what St. John relates concerning Judas, the murmurer: "Now he said this, not because he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and having the purse carried the things that were put therein." (St. John xii. 6.) That was why Judas expressed himself so strongly in disapproval of Mary's act; it deprived him of the opportunity of appropriating to himself a part of the money which the sale of the ointment would have brought to the common purse. In the soul of this man, who was soon to betray his Master, the weeds of evil have long been growing apace, the evil which ere long is to take so terrible a shape. He did not become a traitor all at once, he went on from sin to sin; he began with unfaithfulness in regard to the alms his Lord confided to his keeping, and ended with treachery towards that Lord Himself. St. Augustine bids us observe that Judas' ruin did not commence with his betrayal of his Master, but at a much earlier period. For a long time he had been a thief, and whilst he outwardly followed Christ, at heart he was far from Him. St. Jerome is of opinion that already in the house at Bethania Judas meditated the betrayal of our Lord, in order that with the price he should obtain for selling Him to His enemies, he might compensate himself for the imagined loss he had sustained by the outpouring of the costly ointment. Herein is a twofold lesson for you, my soul. You may perhaps see a Christian, a Priest fall very low all of a sudden—some member of your Order may to your great surprise prove unfaithful to his vows. Immediately

you tremble for yourself, you are full of anxiety and doubt. But do not imagine that the sad event is a sudden occurrence. The outward act of apostacy is sudden, but the inward act took place long before. Furthermore the fall of Judas is a warning to you, for it shows you how precipitous is the downward path which leads to destruction. One begins with little failings, one becomes tepid, indifferent, inexact in observance of the Rule, and so it goes on from one thing to another until that which commenced with infidelity to the commandment and injunctions of God ends with infidelity to God Himself.

**3d.** Consider our Lord's words: "Why do you trouble this woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon Me." (St. Matt. xxvi. 10.) How different is God's judgment to that of men! What they call waste, He asserts to be a good work. But mark the reason why our Lord calls this anointing a good work; St. Mark tells us that He said: "She hath come beforehand to anoint My body for the burial" (St. Mark xiv. 8), and hereby He declares anointing the dead to be a good work. We ought accordingly not only to show charity to our Brethren and Sisters during their lifetime, but also after their death. What we do for them then is a good work. It was on account of this good work that the Lord loved Tobias of old and showed him so much favor. Hence the Wise Man says: "A gift hath grace in the sight of the living; and restrain not grace from the dead." (Ecclus. vii. 37.) How do you, my soul, fulfil this touching duty, this service of love? What do you do for the departed, especially for those who helped and benefited you when they were living? Our Lord teaches us that the merciful shall obtain mercy. Consequently if you are diligent in prayer at the graves of the departed, if you remember them at holy Mass, others will one day pray at your grave, and will remember you when offering the holy sacrifice. At all events, if you pray for the dead fervently, if you pray for them daily, you will be privileged to hear from our Lord's lips these welcome words: "She hath done a good work." Begin to do so this very day.

FRIDAY AFTER THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY  
AFTER PENTECOST.

ON OUR LORD'S CONDUCT IN REGARD TO THE DISCIPLES WHO  
MURMURED ON ACCOUNT OF THE ANOINTING.

Contemplate the Saviour of the world as He is here depicted, on the one hand pleased with the proof Mary gives of her love and reverence, on the other hand listening with divine patience and gentleness to the censure, in His sight both uncharitable and unjust, passed on her by the disciples, at Judas' instigation. Consider what His conduct was on hearing this false judgment.

**1st.** Our Lord defends Mary's act, which to the disciples appears so reprehensible. "Why do you molest her? She hath wrought a good work on Me." (St. Mark xiv. 6.) Observe that the woman who is attacked does not defend herself, but the Lord undertakes her defense, as He does that of every one who suffers for Him and who bears in silence the unjust sentence pronounced upon him. How much matter for meditation this course of action affords you! Do you not perceive that the Lord Himself will vindicate you, if you meet with unjust judgment, if you are blamed and even slandered for His sake, when you are laboring in His service and for His glory? Do you not perceive how utterly unnecessary it is that you should immediately speak up in your own defense? So long as no important matter is at stake, and the interests of others are not involved, the eager desire for self-exculpation is quite out of place, the impetuous and anxious determination to justify oneself when one is blamed. Pursue your good work tranquilly and leave all to God. Thus the saints always acted. The holy martyr Peter of Verona bore a punishment inflicted on him by his Superior without uttering a word to justify himself,

though he could easily have showed the accusation brought against him to be a slander, until it pleased God to make his innocence manifest. "Lord, we are in blindness, and are quickly seduced by vanity. If I look well into myself, never was any wrong done me by any creature, and therefore I cannot justly complain of Thee. But because I have often and grievously sinned against Thee, all creatures are rightly arrayed against me." (Imit. B. iii. ch. 41.) So speaks the author of the Imitation, concerning the judgments of men, and you, poor sinner that you are, imagine yourself obliged to stand on the defensive at the first breath of blame.

2d. Consider how our Lord blamed the disciples when they complained. There is no definite censure in what He said; His words rather express a gentle instruction and explanation of Mary's act, and at any rate only contain the very mildest reproof. Thereby our Lord gives us a most salutary lesson; He teaches us that we should correct, punish and reprimand the faults and failings of our fellow-men with all gentleness and kindness. "A sweet word multiplieth friends and appeaseth enemies," says the Wise Man. (Ecclus. vi. 5.) We ought to treat our Brethren with the utmost consideration, and spare them in every way, handling them as delicately as if they were fragile as glass, and taking care not to offend them in the slightest degree. We ought to correct them, but at the same time to beware of hardening them by our severity. What proficiency the Seraphic Father St. Francis attained in this art! When he had to rebuke any one—and he never failed to administer a rebuke when it was needed—he did not do so as a judge, but as a father, speaking without anger or excitement, without even raising his voice, with a gentleness which betokened the nobility of his mind, as well as the serenity of his heart. It was that which gave him so much influence over others. How is it with you in this respect? Do you follow closely the example of our Lord? Read the admonition St. Francis once gave to his disciples: "If one has to deal with a man of undisciplined and insubordinate character, one

must speak gently in order to appease him, and one must know how to relinquish something of what is due to oneself, for the sake of winning his soul for Christ."

3d. Consider what was the effect of the disciples' censure as far as Mary was concerned. Far from being disadvantageous to her, it was a most happy thing for her. In the first place it was the cause of our Lord speaking in her behalf; then it induced Him to extol and praise her publicly; and finally in order to compensate to her for the reproach addressed to her, He made her this promise: "Wherever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world that also which she hath done shall be told for a memorial of her." (St. Mark xiv. 9.) O welcome censure, that had such happy results for the individual censured. Wherefore, my soul, do not be overmuch distressed if you are the object of harsh judgments, of offensive reproaches; for consider seriously, they will only be for your advantage if you choose that it should be so. For if the reproof is well founded it will be a means of improving you, and if it is unjust, it will give you an opportunity of practising humility and forbearance, an occasion of gaining merit, apart from the fact that your innocence will shine forth all the more brightly when at last God Himself interferes to justify you. "What can any one do against thee by words or wrongs? He hurts himself rather than thee, nor can he, whoever he be, escape the judgment of God. See thou have God before thine eyes and strive not with complaining words. And if at present thou seemest to be overcome, and to suffer a confusion which thou hast not deserved, be not angry at this and do not lessen thy crown by impatience." (Imit. B. iii. ch. 36.) Yes, think of this crown when you have to bear unmerited blame, and do not forget that every wrong or affront endured in patience adds a fresh jewel to your crown in Heaven.

## SATURDAY AFTER THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE MOTHER OF GOD.

To-day represent to yourself Mary, the great and glorious Mother of God, as she appears in one or other of the periods of her wondrous life which you may find touches you most deeply or attracts you most forcibly. Think of her as the Immaculate Virgin, or as the highly-favored Mother of the sweet Infant Jesus, or as the woman of sorrows standing beneath the cross. In each and all of these characters you will regard her with equal veneration, for she is no ordinary woman, she is no ordinary saint, but the Mother of God, surpassing all other saints in grandeur and dignity. Let this title, which no one else but Mary can claim, form the subject of your meditation to-day.

1st. How grand and sublime a thing it is to be the Mother of God, may be gathered from the fact that this title which is given to our blessed Lady contains in brief compass all the rich treasure of the Christian faith. Bourdaloue says that in this one name, *Mother of God*, the whole mystery of the incarnation is comprised, the chief dogma, consequently, of our religion. This title of itself reminds you of the wondrous work of redemption, decreed from all eternity by the triune God, and of the mystery of the human nature of Jesus Christ, with which dogma all other articles of faith are intimately and inseparably connected. This one title recalls to your memory the vast, the infinite charity, mercy and condescension of the Most High, who chose a lowly maiden to be the Mother of God, that thus her brethren and sisters might become the children of God. Search deeply in meditation into the rich dogmatic value of this title:

Mother of God; consider all that it comprises of immense importance to our faith, and you will understand the words St. Cyril addressed to those who dared to gainsay Mary's right to that title. "When once," he declared, "the divine maternity of our Lady is denied, all that was done for our salvation becomes worthless. Withdraw this one article of faith and the whole fabric of our belief collapses; the cross, the salvation, the life of the world is dashed to the ground, and all the confidence and faith of mankind are destroyed with it." A brief consideration will convince you of the truth of this utterance, and make it clearly apparent to you that the veneration paid to the Mother of God is of the greatest consequence not only to the Christian life, but also to the Christian faith.

**2d.** Consider how exalted is the dignity which Mary possesses as the Mother of God. It is true God calls His saints His children, and the angels are termed His children, His friends, His favorites, His sons, but the name of Mother of God belongs solely to the Blessed Virgin. This one name invests her with a dignity far above that of angels and of archangels, far above that of cherubim and seraphim. They are called the children of God, and Mary is the Mother of that same God. Observe one singular circumstance connected with this dignity, great as it was; as long as she lived upon earth, only a few devout souls honored her in this her exalted capacity. St. Elizabeth, for instance, was the first to address Mary by this name: the Mother of my Lord. Otherwise indeed she met with little honor—in fact much opprobrium fell to her lot, as for instance when she stood beneath the cross. Even Jesus Himself made use of no more honorable appellation—and we may be sure He acted intentionally—in speaking to the exalted Mother of God, than that of "Woman"; both at the marriage at Cana and from the cross on Calvary He simply called her by that name. And Mary herself, conscious though she was of her great dignity, regarded herself as the "handmaid of the Lord." Oh what abundant food for thought this fact gives you. You too in your character



of Priest are invested with a special dignity, nay a surpassingly great dignity, and you have every right to the title of *Reverend*. Or as a Religious you are regarded with respect in the Church, you stand high in God's sight, and your state is justly considered to entitle you to the esteem of the faithful. Yet together with, nay in consequence of that dignity you will meet with more contempt than honor here below, none but a few pious individuals will show you the respect due to your office, and you may even find yourself treated by God Himself with a certain apparent coldness. You will be served precisely as Mary was, and well will it be for you if in spite of your dignity, you have as lowly an opinion of yourself as she had of herself; if with every step upward on the ladder of honors you take a step downwards in humility, and with each promotion to a higher post you combine a deeper sense of your own unworthiness. Do this and you will receive greater grace from God as Mary did, of whom St. Augustine wrote: "Because, O Queen, thou wast the most humble of women, thou didst compel the uncreated Word to take flesh of thy flesh." And St. Bernard says: "It was only just that she, from being the last should become the first, because although she was the first she made herself the last."

**3d.** Consider how Mary's title of Mother of God did not unfold itself in its full splendor until after her death. Consider the signal honors and distinctions which were the portion of the Mother of God both in Heaven and on earth subsequently to her death; think of all the hymns and canticles of praise composed in her honor, think of all the churches and chapels dedicated to her, the services and pilgrimages which have contributed and still contribute to enhance the glory of the Mother of God, and you will perceive how true was her prediction concerning herself: "All generations shall call me blessed." (St. Luke i. 48.) Thus at the close of this mortal life the honors due to her were fully paid by both God and man. The destiny of the children of God is the exact reverse of that of the children of the world. The latter are honored in this life, and after

death they are forgotten; whereas the former are despised now and later on they are called blessed, blessed for evermore. Which kind of honor do you prefer? The answer is not far to seek. And yet, my soul, you crave for the pitiful honors of the world, you find it hard to be despised instead of esteemed by the world. Learn this very day, learn of the Mother of God to condemn the honors of earth; prefer the honor which is of God, and with your whole heart pray in the words of the author of the Imitation: "Let the Jews seek glory one man of another; I will seek that which is from God alone. All human glory indeed, all temporal honor, all worldly grandeur, compared with Thy eternal glory, is vanity and foolishness. O my truth and my mercy, my God, Blessed Trinity, to Thee alone be praise, honor, power, glory, for endless ages of ages!" (Imit. B. iii. ch. 41.)

## THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE CONDUCT OF THE RULER IN THE GOSPEL OF THE DAY.

Imagine that you see the ruler or viceroy presenting himself before our Lord in fear and anxious apprehension on account of the illness of his dearly-loved son, beseeching the great Worker of miracles with the urgency of paternal affection: "Lord, come down before that my son die." (St. John iv. 49.) What is more touching than this tender, anxious entreaty on the part of the loving father? And yet our Lord, the kind, the bounteous Saviour, instead of returning an answer calculated to reassure the petitioner gives him a gentle rebuke. Listen to His words:

**1st.** "Unless you see signs and wonders you believe not." (v. 48.) These grave words our Lord addresses to the father of the sick child, yet not to him only; not for him only are they intended but for all of us as well. The ruler in his affliction went to the Lord as a worker of mira-

cles, as one who could help him and relieve him. He did not come to Him spontaneously, out of a free and joyous heart, but impelled by necessity; he wants our Lord's assistance, he desires a miracle worked on his behalf, and then perhaps, he will be prepared to believe. Our Lord is not satisfied with that; this selfish attraction to Himself is not enough, a faith so imperfect, dependent upon signs and wonders, is no true faith, and is deservedly, as in this instance, censured by our Lord. It is not His works, His signs, His benefits that we should seek, but Himself; it is not only His miracles that should lead us to believe, on which our faith should be founded, but His words: "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed." Abraham believed the word of the Lord when He promised him a son in his old age, while Gedeon required a sign when God assured him of victory. It is no difficult matter to decide which of these two was the most perfect. Ponder this well, my soul, and examine your conscience. How is it with you in this respect? Is your faith, your trust in the Lord as unconditional, as free from all doubts and misgivings, from all desire to have a sign beforehand, as our Lord requires it to be? Is your attachment to Him, your abandonment of yourself to Him, the service you render to your God disinterested, free from all secondary considerations and self-seeking? So that you can conscientiously say that the following words from the Imitation do not apply to you: "In many the eye of pure intention is dim, for men quickly look towards something delightful that comes in their way, and it is rare to find any one wholly free from all blemish of self-seeking. So the Jews heretofore came to Bethania, to Martha and Mary, not for the sake of Jesus only, but that they might see Lazarus." (Imit. B. iii. ch. 33.)

**2d.** Consider how quickly the ruler profited by our Lord's admonition, for St. John tells us: "Jesus saith to him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. The man believed the word which Jesus said to him and went his way." (v. 30.) The same man who had come with the mistaken idea that our Lord could only heal the sick when present before

Him, and who had in fact never known it to be otherwise in the case of those whom He had cured until then, now believes in His word, believes what is contrary to his own opinion and his own experience, that our Lord can do a thing hitherto unheard of, that is, heal the sick at a distance merely by His command. That is right faith, that is true confidence which does not waver although preconceived ideas and experience are at variance with it. Learn a lesson from this ruler, my soul. How often it is said to you: Go thy way! Go to that mission, go to fill that post, go to undertake that difficult work, and so forth. In your own opinion you are wholly unfitted for the task assigned you, or previous experience has convinced you that the mission on which you are sent is hopeless, yet "go thy way" all the same. God speaks to you by the lips of your Superior; trust in God and "believe the word which Jesus said." You do not send yourself, God sends you, for your Superior is His representative; therefore you ought not to feel the slightest want of confidence, however conscious you may be of your own weakness and misery. "The weak things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the strong, and things that are not that He might bring to naught things that are, that no flesh should glory in His sight, but that as it is written: He that glorieth may glory in the Lord (I. Cor. i. 27), to whom be praise and honor for ever and ever." Such was the answer the Seraphic St. Francis gave to a Brother who inquired of him how it was that any one so unlearned and insignificant as the Father was could accomplish so great things in the world.

**3d.** Consider the conclusion of the Gospel narrative; we are told that the servants of the ruler came to meet him and brought word that his son had recovered. "He asked therefore of them the hour wherein he grew better. And they said to him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. The father therefore knew that it was at the same hour that Jesus said to him, Thy son liveth; and himself believed and his whole house." (v. 51-53.) Here observe two things: How strikingly the father's faith in

our Lord's word was justified, and how literally the Lord's promise was fulfilled. Never, never does He deceive us, never does any one believe in Him in vain! How often have you seen this truth exemplified in your own case and that of others! The second consideration which this narrative offers is this: Doubtless the father, and indeed his whole household with him, regarded it as the greatest calamity that the beloved son of the house should be grievously sick. And yet without this apparent misfortune neither the father nor the members of his household would have come to a knowledge of the truth. The anxious entreaty: "Lord, come down before that my son die," brought about the happy result: "Himself believed and his whole house." Here again you may learn a lesson: learn that afflictions may be of great profit, and that God may have the most gracious designs on our behalf, when we are inclined to murmur at His providence. It is good for us to have afflictions and trials to bear sometimes, for they lead a man to look into his own heart, to regard himself as an alien and a pilgrim here on earth, and to place his hopes on nothing in this world. "It is no great thing if a man be cheerful and devout as long as he feels no burden; but if in the time of tribulation he waits with humility and patience, he has the hope of making great progress." Thus we read in the *Imitation of Christ*; lay these words to heart.

## MONDAY AFTER THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE REASON OF OUR LORD'S SOLEMN ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

To-day you are invited to accompany the Saviour of mankind, when, issuing from His temporary retreat, He makes His solemn entry into Jerusalem. Not quietly and so as to escape observation, but in a manner calculated to create a great stir and sensation; not as an ordinary pilgrim going up for the festival, but as a triumphant king, is it our Lord's intention to enter David's royal city for the last time. He wishes His entry to be attended by the acclamations of the people, with demonstrations of joy from the crowds who flock from all sides and throng His path. Why is this? What is the reason why the lowly Redeemer adopts a course of conduct seemingly so unlike that which it is His wont to pursue?

**1st.** From time immemorial it was the custom of the judges of Israel and the sons of kings to ride on asses or mules on festive occasions, or in the processions when peace was proclaimed. It was in order to show what He was in reality, the King and Ruler of the Hebrew people, the Judge not only of the Jews but of the whole human race, that our Lord willed to make a solemn entry into the chief city of His royal ancestors. He whose whole life on earth had been passed in poverty and lowliness, reserved that scene of regal pomp to the last, to the days immediately preceding His Passion, and in His divine wisdom He chose that it should take the form most befitting His character, His dignity, and the object of His mission. He enters Jerusalem as a king, for it was for the purpose of founding God's kingdom upon earth that He came down from Heaven; He enters as a Judge, for He Himself declared on the occasion of His entry: "Now is the judg-

ment of this world, now shall the Prince of this world be cast out." (St. John xii. 31.) Now the fact that the despised Redeemer should at the close of His life make so solemn, so triumphant an entry into the city of Sion, may serve to remind you of the joyous truth that when this life of misery and contempt on earth is at an end, a glorious entry into the heavenly Jerusalem awaits you. But it is so only on this condition, you must have lived in poverty and abjection for the love of God; you must, like our Lord, be a king and a judge in a mystical sense, that is, you must rule yourself firmly and judge yourself mercilessly, before you appear before the divine Judge of all men. How is it with you in this respect?

**2d.** Consider that it was customary amongst the Jews to bring the paschal lambs into the city of Jerusalem five days previously to the feast of the Passover, and there to slaughter them with elaborate ceremonial and observance of ritual. Therefore Jesus, the true Paschal Lamb, went up five days before He was to offer the sacrifice of His life with great pomp and solemnity to the city of David, where He was to be put to death for the sins of the world. How deeply touching, how affecting it is to think of this! To think how our Lord with the acclamations of the people ringing in His ears, greeted by the shouts of hosanna from thousands of gladsome voices, enters Jerusalem in the character of a king or a prince! Alas! He is in reality the innocent victim, soon to be led to the slaughter; and amid the loud jubilation of the people He has reason to sigh, for this triumphal procession is to Him at the same time the mournful way of the cross. Hence the profound gravity that rested upon our Lord's countenance on His entry into Jerusalem. Would that you, my soul, could preserve this seriousness, this profound gravity amid all earth's joys and honors, amid the approval and applause you meet with. Would that you could never allow yourself to be fascinated, carried away, inebriated by them! Here precisely the distinction is to be seen between the earthly-minded and the heavenly-minded, between worldlings and Religious. The former cannot be happy with-

out the pleasures and dignities of earth, while the latter cannot be happy when they fall to their lot, for they feel in this respect with the author of the Imitation, and take upon their lips his prayer: "O my God, unspeakable sweetness, turn for me into bitterness all carnal consolation which withdraws me from the love of things eternal, and wickedly allures me to itself by setting before me some present delightful good." (Imit. B. iii. ch. 26.)

**3d.** Consider how willingly, how patiently Isaac of old ascended Mount Moria, where he was to be sacrificed as a burnt offering, and how unresistingly he suffered himself to be bound and laid upon the altar. His fortitude was indeed most astonishing, most admirable! But behold, far more astonishing, far more worthy of admiration is that which our Lord did. Not only did He go to the altar of sacrifice without a murmur, without the slightest resistance: He went with gladness, with exultation; He enters the city where are those who have sworn to put Him to death with rejoicings as great as if He were going to a merry marriage feast. Here you perceive the third reason of this solemn triumphal entry. Our Lord intended to give us an example, to teach us that for the love of God and to accomplish His holy will, we ought to embrace the cross and endure death, not only willingly, but joyfully and exultantly. This the holy martyrs did. When led to torture and to death the world looked on them as criminals led to the gallows, but in reality they were the victors in a triumphal progress, and oftentimes on their way they were cheered by the encouraging cries of their fellow Christians. To all appearances they were being led to the slaughter, but in point of fact they were wending their way with rejoicing to the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem. Why do you not imitate your Lord in this respect? Why cannot you be brought to go with cheerfulness, if not with gladness, where suffering awaits you? It is because you do not think of what is so beautifully expressed in the Imitation of Christ: "Behold all is on the cross, and on dying lies all; and there is no other way to life and true inward peace but the way of the holy cross and of daily



mortification. Walk where thou wilt, seek what thou wilt, and thou wilt find no higher way above, no safer way below, than the way of the holy cross." (Imit. B. ii. ch. 12.) Our Lord walked in that way with gladness on the day of His triumphal and glorious entry. O see that you do not tread that same path shamefacedly and reluctantly, not to say with feelings of aversion.

## TUESDAY AFTER THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE VIRTUES WHICH OUR LORD DISPLAYED ON THE  
OCCASION OF HIS TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

Again imagine yourself a witness of the glorious entry of Christ. Picture to yourself the multitudes that thronged around the Saviour, shouting for joy, and exulting; contemplate the Pharisees standing aloof, their countenances either inflamed with rage or pale with envy; look with gladness at the joy of the disciples carrying palm-branches, and lastly turn your eyes on our Lord as He goes on His way amid the noisy crowd, in His sacred majesty and unmoved gravity—a saint amongst sinners—a personification of virtue surrounded by the servants of vice. See what grand virtues our Lord manifests on the occasion of this entry into Jerusalem, and let your meditation be upon them.

1st. The Evangelist tells us: "Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold thy King cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of her that is used to the yoke." (St. Matt. xxi. 4, 5.) Thus we see that it was in order to fulfil the Scriptures, in order to be obedient to the will of His Father, that our Lord made this solemn entry into Jerusalem, that He went up to the city in a man-

ner which ill corresponded to His humility and unassuming character. How this obedience on our Lord's part calls for our admiration! How strikingly this virtue is apparent in the whole course of His life! It is no less obvious on the occasion of this triumphal entry into Jerusalem than when a few days later, He passed, an object of scorn and shame, out of that same city. Out of obedience to His Father the Redeemer remained at a distance from Jerusalem, in concealment, and now again out of obedience to that same Father He approaches the city amid the acclamations of the people. In a word, you may contemplate our Lord under the most varying circumstances and diverse positions of His life; you may behold Him now in sorrow, now in gladness, now persecuted, now sought after, now magnified, now despised, and you will always and invariably find Him obedient. God grant that the same may be said of you, who desire one day to enter into the heavenly Jerusalem; God grant that you may constantly practise as our Lord did this virtue of obedience, of which St. Augustine says: "It is the greatest of all virtues and so to speak the source and parent of all other virtues." May you in obedience be willing to hasten to the way of the cross; that is, to undertake occupations which are repugnant to nature, as willing in fact as to walk on the pleasant path, i.e., to take part in recreations and innocent conversations in their due time and place. For to join in these may equally be a sacrifice demanded by obedience, in fact it ought so to be, just as the entry into Jerusalem was for our Lord.

**2d.** Consider the unmoved composure and perfect equanimity our Lord displayed on the occasion of His entry into Jerusalem. That is the second virtue which was most clearly brought into relief. However enthusiastic the jubilation, however loud the acclamations, however deafening the shouts, and intoxicating the unprecedented honors shown Him, our Lord remains serene, grave, majestic and reserved in His demeanor. No courting of the popular favor can be remarked, no flattering

words are addressed to the crowds who flock around; not even the slightest expression of pleasure at the ovation He receives is discernible on our Lord's features. Meditate deeply on this fact, my soul, for in itself it bears sufficient evidence to the divinity of our Lord, of His superiority to all that is purely human. He knew too well the fickleness of the populace to allow Himself to be carried away by its applause, and consequently He preserved the same imperturbable composure, the same unruffled equanimity when rocked by the rippling stream of joy as when tossed by the stormy waves of suffering. How far you are from possessing this virtue! Where is your tranquillity, your equanimity? How elated you are in prosperity, and how dejected in adversity! How quickly fortune with her fluctuating balance raises you up to-day in one scale to the height of happiness, and to-morrow in the other scale sinks you to the lowest depth of despondency. See from this that as yet you, although a Christian, a Priest, have little resemblance to Christ; you are no perfect Religious, or else you would make your own the words of a saintly monk, who acknowledged to his Abbot: "Neither does good fortune elate me, nor does misfortune depress me. Nothing that happens to me has power to disturb or disquiet me. In all the changes and chances of life, whether they affect me personally or my Brethren in general, I continually preserve the same peace, the same serenity of soul." See that you strive to attain this peace, and you will be striving after eternal peace.

3d. Consider another virtue which was strikingly apparent in our Lord on the occasion of His entry into Jerusalem, and that is His mortification. How can this be? Is it an act of mortification, of self-denial to figure like a royal personage in a grand procession, with the acclamations of a whole nation sounding in your ears? Yes, it was indeed an act of mortification for Him, who knew that the self-same people would in a few days' time surround Him with strangely altered sentiments, that their shouts would be of a very different nature. Amongst

those who carried palm-branches before Him, Jesus already saw the very men who were to be His executioners, and mingled with the hosannas His ear already heard the cruel cry: Let Him be crucified! Thus every step on the way to Jerusalem was a thorn that pierced His sensitive heart and made it all the more an act of self-denial and mortification: just as a preceding period of happiness makes the suffering that comes after seem greater by contrast, and the honor and respect we once enjoyed make subsequent disgrace and shame more painful. As our Lord always and everywhere manifested the same spirit of obedience, the same unruffled serenity, so He evinced the same love of self-abnegation and mortification. Take example by Him, and exercise this virtue at all times and in all places, in the most trifling matters as well as on great and solemn occasions. For instance, says St. Bonaventure, if you go into the garden, and there you see a flower which you would like to gather, refrain from plucking it, as an act of mortification. The servant of God, the same saint adds, should often say to himself: Out of love to Thee, O my God, I will not look at that object, I will not listen to that conversation, I will not take that dish, I will deny myself that little pleasure. This sounds hard, and it is in very deed hard for the carnal man to act thus, but soon, as St. Francis assures us, that which appeared bitter, will be changed into sweetness for soul and body. Follow the example of your Lord and the exhortations of the saint, and endeavor this very day, should an opportunity present itself, to practise one of the three virtues in question.

## WEDNESDAY AFTER THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON OUR LORD'S ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM RIDING UPON AN  
ASS.

Place before you the scene which the apostle Matthew describes in the following manner: "Jesus said to His disciples: Go ye into the village that is over against you, and immediately you shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her, loose them and bring them to Me. . . . And the disciples going did as Jesus commanded them. And they brought the ass and the colt, and laid their garments upon them and made Him sit thereon." (St. Matt. xxi. 4, 6, 7.) To this incident, which the Evangelist portrays so graphically, the Fathers of the Church attach a higher, a mystic interpretation.

**1st.** Consider what the ass symbolizes. The Fathers explain the ass, which is essentially a beast of burden, as intended to represent the synagogue, which bears the weight of the law; the colt signifies the Gentiles. "Our Lord," thus St. Chrysostom writes, "commanded both these animals to be brought as a prediction that together with the Jewish synagogue that had borne the yoke of the law for a long time, the Gentile nations, who had hitherto not been subject to that yoke, were called to aid in the work of salvation." In a more limited sense the ass may be understood as representing the sinner. God in His mercy wills to admit him to Jerusalem, to permit him to enter the heavenly Sion; accordingly He sends out the apostles or their successors to loose those who are bound by their sins, to release them by means of sacerdotal absolution from their bondage, and then bring them to Jesus, who in the sacrament of Holy Communion makes His entry into the purified heart of the penitent. Meditate attentively on the spiritual interpretation of this inci-

dent, my soul; examine yourself, lest you prove after all to be "tied" as was the ass; examine yourself, lest almost before the glad hosannas wherewith you greet the coming of your Lord have died away, your voice should join in the cry: "Let Him be crucified;" examine yourself whether you are in very truth an ass in the Lord's service, one who bears Christ, and with Him bears His law, His yoke, His burden.

**2d.** Consider that the garments of the apostles were laid upon the ass on which our Lord rode, and the garments of many were spread on the way over which it passed. According to Origen, the garments of the apostles represent good works. "In fact," he says, "the ass that the disciples loosed, the ass that carries our Lord—the sinner, that is, who is absolved—passes over the garments of the apostles when he receives their doctrine and follows the example of their life." Lay to heart the words of the great theologian. If you desire to be indeed one who bears Christ, if you desire to have Christ abiding within you and to show by your life that you belong to Him, then take to yourself the garments of the apostles, practise the virtues of the apostles. As a Priest, a Religious you ought to lead the life of an apostle, you ought to observe apostolic simplicity and poverty, you ought to possess the faith of the apostle Peter, the charity of the apostle John, the zeal for souls that characterized the Apostle Paul. The ass on which our Lord rode passed over the garments of the apostles; do as it did in this respect according to the signification given above, and you will enjoy the same privilege that it did, it will be your happy lot to bear Christ about with you.

**3d.** Consider what St. Chrysostom says further on this subject: "I think that it was not merely for the sake of the symbolism that our Lord chose to ride upon an ass, He thereby designed also to give us a rule for our conduct. We are to learn that it is not requisite for us to be provided with horses: it is enough to make use of asses to ride upon; we should, that is, be contented

with what is absolutely necessary. For this reason our Lord Himself, when for the first and last time He manifests Himself in the regal dignity appertaining to Him, still will have His poverty and lowliness appear, inasmuch as He chooses to ride upon the commonest of animals, one, too, which is only borrowed. Learn of Christ how you can best journey to the heavenly Jerusalem. Not with splendid surroundings and the enjoyment of superfluities, not with the luxuries wealth can procure, but in modest poverty and simplicity. This simplicity, temperance, contentment with mere necessities, is a virtue which becomes the poor no less than the rich, which is as attractive in the beggar as in the prince, and is moreover indispensable in the Religious if he would be admitted into the heavenly Sion. Without this virtue the Religious can neither attain holiness in this world nor happiness hereafter, but possessing it, both are within his reach; for, St. Francis says, poverty is a heavenly, a divine virtue; it infuses into the soul contempt for all earthly things, it releases her from the fetters that might bind her to this troublesome world, it enables her to direct all her thoughts to Heaven, to raise herself up to God with greater facility and unite herself to Him more speedily. Meditate upon these words, and you will abandon the idea of entering the heavenly Jerusalem in any other fashion than with the poverty and lowliness that distinguished your Lord, who rode upon an ass, and that not His own, but the property of another.

## THURSDAY AFTER THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE BEHAVIOR OF THE PEOPLE ON THE OCCASION OF  
OUR LORD'S ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

Hitherto, in meditating upon this subject, your eyes have been fixed upon the Saviour of mankind, journeying up to Jerusalem; to-day turn your attention to the surging crowds that surround Him. A vast concourse of people had come up to Jerusalem on account of the approaching festival. All of them had already heard of the great Thaumaturgus of Nazareth, who healed all manner of sickness, who stilled the stormy waves, and fed thousands with a few loaves of bread. Now in addition to these wonders there was a new, an unparalleled miracle: the raising of Lazarus from the dead when decomposition had already set in. An enthusiastic admiration for our Lord was the ruling sentiment of the populace; they saw in the great Prophet, the looked-for Messias, only an earthly monarch, it is true, one who they hoped would re-establish the kingdom of David. Accordingly when they see Him coming down from the Mount of Olives, the multitudes hasten to meet our Lord with shouts of exultation.

1st. "Hosanna! blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord! Blessed be the kingdom of our father David that cometh, Hosanna in the highest." (St. Mark xi. 9.) Such are the cries wherewith they greet the Saviour. Even the children by the wayside catch the general enthusiasm, and unite their voices to swell the chorus of hosanna, thus fulfilling the words of the Psalmist: "Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings Thou hast perfected praise." (Ps. viii. 3.) Endeavor to realize the effect of this vast tribute of praise with which the streets of Jerusalem rang, and reflect upon the manner in which you ought to receive and salute your Lord, when He enters



into your heart, when He descends upon the altar, when He is enthroned in the tabernacle, in meekness and lowliness, as when He was seated upon the ass. You ought to hasten joyfully to His presence, as the people did, when the time comes to sing His praises. Alas! if the very children shout hosanna when the Redeemer draws near, what can be said of a Priest who neglects to offer to God his daily sacrifice of praise? If Jews press forward eagerly to magnify the name of the Lord, what must be thought of the monk who reluctantly, bitterly, grudgingly, drags himself (if we may so speak) to the choir when the divine Office is to be sung? It is recorded of the saintly Capuchin Father Jerome of Novaria that when he was sick, he insisted on being carried into the choir, and when old and infirm, he invariably stood up in his place, because he considered saying the Office an occupation of the angels, and he thought it becoming to stand up and raise his eyes to Heaven, and sing the divine praises with as much devotion as if he had already joined the denizens of the celestial courts. Reflect upon this, my soul, and you will recite the Breviary with as much piety and recollection as St. Francis did; he made a rule of always pausing on a journey when the time came for the divine Office, for he said: "If the body must needs rest, in order to take the food necessary to sustain nature, ought not the soul all the more to be undisturbed when it partakes of the spiritual nourishment which is to fit it for entering upon life eternal?"

**2d.** Consider that the people were not content with a tribute of praise. St. Matthew expressly tells us: "A very great multitude spread their garments in the way." (xxi. 8.) This they did to testify their subjection, to acknowledge Him as their King to whom they owed allegiance, to whom they paid homage by humbly laying themselves and all they possessed at His feet. Learn from this, my soul, what you ought to do when your Lord comes to you. Not only ought you to offer Him a sacrifice of praise, not only ought you to honor Him with your lips, you ought above all to offer Him the oblation of your heart, to give yourself

wholly to Him, to surrender to Him all you are and all you have, in lowly abjection placing yourself at His feet. Pause a moment and only think who you are, and who Christ is! You will then assuredly feel that you cannot do better than cast, not your garments, but yourself at your Saviour's feet in lowly subjection, saying in the words of the Imitation: "Oh how humble and lowly ought I to think of myself! How little ought I to esteem whatever good I may seem to have! How low ought I to cast myself under Thine unfathomable judgments, O Lord, when I find myself to be nothing else but nothing, yea nothing! O weight immense, O sea impassable, where I find nothing about myself but that I am wholly nothing!" (Imit. B. ii. ch. 14.) Such are the dispositions wherewith a saint stands in our Lord's presence; what ought to be the thoughts that fill your mind, what the attitude of your soul when He comes to abide with you? See that you at least lay the garment of self-seeking on the ground, and whenever you approach your Redeemer spread out in the way, with true contrition, the robe of confession of sin, in order that you may not give your Lord a worse reception than the Jews did.

**3d.** Consider another act the Jewish people performed on the occasion of our Lord's entry: "Others cut boughs from the trees and strewed them in the way." This we read in St. Matthew's gospel (ch. xxi. 8) and St. John also expressly states: "A great multitude that was come to the festival day, when they had heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet Him." (St. John xii. 12.) Palm-branches which are carried in triumphal processions and on festive occasions are a symbol of victory. When our Lord makes His entry into our heart, we ought to go forth to meet Him with the same trophies of victory which the Jews carried when they went out to greet the approaching Redeemer; we ought never to come before our gracious Lord without having at least one victory to show over our passions and corrupt inclinations. Now make this resolution, my soul; say to yourself: From henceforth never

will I come before the Most Holy God without a palm-branch, without having previously mortified myself in some particular. Do this, and you will make rapid progress. The saints acted thus, and therefore the Church represents them with palms in their hands, and it is in reference to this that St. Theophylact says: "Let us also strew the path of our life by cutting down boughs from the trees, in other words, by imitating the saints. For the saints are trees whose branches we cut off when we follow the example of their virtues."

## FRIDAY AFTER THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE WINE MINGLED WITH GALL WHICH WAS GIVEN TO  
OUR LORD UPON THE CROSS.

On this day, when you are reminded of our Lord's bitter Passion and death, contemplate Him at the moment when He reached the summit of Calvary, exhausted, wearied unto death. He stretches out His hand to take the goblet offered Him, to revive Him in some degree. Imagine the joy a traveller feels, a traveller who is overcome with heat and parched with thirst, at the sight of a cool, sparkling stream; or think of the relief experienced by a sick man when, after he has waited long and patiently, a charitable individual approaches his bedside with a refreshing beverage. Try to realize this, and then consider the following points.

**1st.** The torture inflicted on our Lord by thirst was bitter, but no less bitter was the draught offered to quench that thirst. Recall briefly to mind all that He had gone through since the night of His agony on Mount Olivet until the time of which we are speaking. The loss of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane, in the scourging at the pillar, and the crowning with thorns must have occasioned a burning thirst; this was aggravated by the scorching

heat of the sun, which, beating upon Him as He was dragged from the tribunal of one judge to that of another, and finally made to follow the way of the cross, rendered His sufferings more acute, and brought to a climax His need of a refreshing, invigorating drink to assuage His thirst and recruit His strength. Yet see, not a drop of cool water, not a mouthful of generous wine is given to the tortured Victim; only a draught of intense bitterness, for it is mingled with nauseous, disgusting gall. O suffering Saviour! how cruelly Thou dost expiate, how greatly Thou dost put to shame the daintiness of my palate! We, wretched sinners that we are, are so greedy, so particular, so difficult to please in regard to our food and drink; we find it so difficult to practise self-denial, we complain at once if we have to endure the slightest privation, real or imaginary—and Jesus, our Lord, in His burning thirst has nothing but gall and vinegar to drink. Reflect on this, my soul. St. Augustine, St. Bernard, extraordinarily temperate as they were at table, declared it to be difficult to exclude sensuality, and we consider ourselves as most mortified individuals though our fare is by no means poor in quality or scanty in quantity. St. Francis once was obliged to remind his sons that they had to guard against excess in fasting rather than in eating—what would he say now? Be warned to-day, and for your edification turn your attention to the draught of gall given to your Lord; and if ever you suffer from the want of refreshment, remember the following legend, which we read in the chronicles of the Brothers Minor. Two pious Religious on a journey, passing through a desert region were much tormented by thirst. All at once they came upon a clear, cool spring, beside which a young boy was sitting and weeping. When they asked the child why he was so sorrowful, when they were so glad to find this welcome stream, he answered: “Ought I not to weep, for I can quench my thirst with refreshing water, whereas Jesus, my Lord, had only bitter gall.” As he spoke the vision vanished; the two Brothers went on their way, but neither of them was again heard to complain of thirst.

**2d.** Wine was given to our Lord, but it was mingled with gall. Think of these two liquids when they are separate. How sweet, how welcome, how delicious a draught of wine is to one who is thirsty, and on the other hand how nauseous, how revolting is gall! Without the latter the goblet offered to Christ would have been a grateful refreshment to Him, but through being thus mingled it only added to our Lord's sufferings. The wine of its nature is intended to revive and invigorate, but this mixture does the very reverse. How often, my soul, do you in the supernatural order offer to your Lord something which in itself is good wine, but is mingled with bitter gall. Are not your good works a choice wine? True, but they are mingled with the gall of ambition and the desire to please. Are not your prayers a sweet wine? True, but they are mingled with the gall of wandering, uncharitable thoughts. Is not your earnestness and zeal in the care of souls, in the observance of the Rule, the maintenance of discipline, a pure, unadulterated wine? True, but it is mingled with the gall of self-seeking, of undue severity, of unkindness and exaggeration. Leave off mixing your wine in this manner; offer to the Lord a pure, a virgin wine; offer Him that pure, unmixed love of which St. Bernard speaks when he says: Love when real is sufficient to itself; to be permitted to love the object beloved is the only guerdon it asks. We ought to love God as the bridegroom loves the bride, to love Him for His own sake, and this love ought to constitute our sole joy and felicity, for love is its own recompense and reward. Beyond itself it seeks no reason for loving, it asks no advantage. It is enough for love to love. I love, because I love; I love for the sake of loving.

**3d.** Consider what is the chalice our Lord offers to man, who gave Him gall to drink. It is His precious blood. O wondrous, most touching return! Jesus stands languishing, fainting on Golgotha, His parched lips thirst for a drop of cooling water, and alas! man gives Him nothing but bitter gall. Our Lord is now continually in our midst, spiritually thirsting for our good works, and alas! what do

men offer Him? Either gall, thus adding sin to sin; or (and these are the better sort) others do indeed give Him the desired draught, but it is mingled with gall; they offer this bitter beverage to Him who gives us His sacred, precious blood to drink, who bids us draw from the fount of living water, the river of life eternal; who has refreshed us, who continues often to refresh us with the celestial wine of the Holy Eucharist.

Meditate upon this wondrous, this deeply affecting contrast, my soul; weigh it attentively and perhaps it may awaken within your breast that emotion which the consideration of the two first points failed to excite. Perhaps you will then make a special resolution on this day and on every recurring Friday to offer your Saviour in His thirst a spiritual refreshment by devoutly making the way of the cross.

## SATURDAY AFTER THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE NAME OF "WOMAN," WHEREBY OUR LORD UPON THE  
CROSS ADDRESSED HIS MOTHER.

On this, the last day of the week, we again turn our attention to Mary. Imagine that you see the Blessed Virgin standing beneath the cross, that you see with what anguish she notes the signs of her Son's approaching dissolution, the deadly pallor of His features, His labored breath, His fast-glazing eye, and that at this very moment the livid lips of the dying Saviour are parted once more, to speak for the last time to His Mother; His words are these: "Woman, behold thy son." (St. John xix. 26.)

**1st.** Jesus addresses His Mother by the appellation "Woman" for her trial. "O most kind Jesus," exclaims St. Chrysostom, "why art Thou ashamed to own her to be Thy Mother who nurtured Thee so lovingly, who con-

stantly served Thee with such maternal affection?" The saint wonders that our Lord in taking leave of Mary should deny her the title of Mother, and St. Bernard exclaims in similar surprise: "O Mary, does not this speech: Woman, behold thy son, wound thy maternal heart more deeply than a sharp sword?" But thus He is accustomed to act, who for our instruction has said: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor your ways My ways." (Is. lv. 8.) With the thief who had long offended against Him with grievous sins, the Saviour converses in the most consoling and condescending manner; whereas to His immaculate Mother, to her who throughout His whole life has devoted herself to His service with indescribable affection, and who has known no sin, He speaks with apparent harshness, not even giving her the tender name of Mother, but addressing her as if she were a stranger.

Pause, my soul, and consider that God is wont to treat those for whom He reserves a great and high destiny, who belong to the number of His elect and are most beloved by Him, with apparent coldness, for a season, and to bestow on them less affection, or to speak more correctly, to show fewer signs of His favor to them than to those who have offended Him. This truth you see exemplified here, and you see it times without number in the lives of the saints. Impress this truth on your mind for your consolation. Perhaps you feel this, and it appears hard and unkind; that of late you have experienced less peace, less joy, less consolation, than you ever have felt since you forsook the way of transgression and entered the service of God. But do not be cast down on this account; look at Mary, whom our Lord loved so tenderly, loved with the affection of a son, and for whom He had already prepared the most glorious throne in the Heavens, and whom in spite of this, He from the cross addressed simply as "Woman." Listen to the words of Thomas à Kempis: "Such a trial is often more profitable than if thou wert always to have prosperity according to thy will. For the merits of a man are not to be estimated by his having many visions or consolations, but by his being grounded

in true humility and full of divine charity." (Imit. B. iii. ch. 7.)

**2d.** Consider how according to St. Chrysostom's opinion, our Lord when upon the cross addressed Mary as "Woman" out of compassion, and a desire to spare her feelings. He did this, the saint says, that He might not wound her heart more deeply by calling her His Mother. What painful thoughts and feelings would have been awakened in her breast on hearing the name of Mother once more from the lips of her expiring Son! For this reason our Lord avoided making use of that title and merely called her "Woman." If you adopt this second explanation, my soul, consider that it is a characteristic of truly charitable souls to avoid with the utmost solicitude every word, every allusion howsoever slight, which might cause more pain to hearts that are already afflicted and suffering, and that the real Christian, although he does not shrink from rebuking and censuring when this is necessary, is careful never to wound the feelings of another. Are you one of those who act thus tenderly? Examine yourself on this point, and lay to heart the following incident which is found in the annals of the Franciscan Order. A certain Brother, having allowed himself to speak harshly and bitterly to one of his Brethren in the presence of a nobleman of Assisi, when he perceived the pain he had caused to the Brother whom he had offended, in order to atone for the scandal he had given to the nobleman, he put some mud into his mouth, and said: Swallow this mud, O mouth, since you dared to vomit forth gall and venom against thy brother. The nobleman was greatly edified. Have you perhaps cause to imitate the penance of that Brother?

**3d.** Our Lord calls Mary "Woman" to do her honor. St. Cyril says that our Lord gave her this title in order that all the world might know her to be the woman of whom God spoke when He promised: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed." (Gen. iii. 15.) This is consequently a glorious and illustrious title. As a woman, the first



woman, the mother of an ill-fated posterity stood beside the tree which caused the ruin of the human race, so now beneath the tree which was to be to us a tree of life, another woman stands, Mary, who was to be the spiritual mother of a new and happy race. The woman who wrought destruction is now confronted with the woman who brings salvation. Thus it is that a name, an appellation which at first strikes strangely on the ear when applied to Mary by her crucified Son, receives a sublime signification, is found to be a treasury of spiritual meaning. Meditate deeply on this subject, and learn from the "Woman" standing beneath the cross how you may at all times and in all places crush the head of the wicked serpent. Perhaps you have some perverse propensity, some secret passion, which weighs more or less upon your conscience; courage, tread upon the head of that serpent as did the "Woman" who stood beneath the cross, go to confession this very day, and if you experience any difficulty in this matter, be not dismayed, there is one who is ready to help you, the one to whom Jesus when dying said: "Woman, behold thy son!"

## THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT IN THE GOSPEL FOR TO-DAY.

We are told that Peter put this question to our Lord: "Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me and I forgive him? till seven times?" (St. Matt. xviii. 21.) That appeared to the apostle to be going as far as possible in the way of conciliation. Our Lord viewed it otherwise. He was not satisfied with forgiving seven times only, He required it to be till seventy times seven; and in order to make this sublime precept of Christianity intelligible to the disciples, He related to them the parable of the unmerciful servant. Listen to this parable as it comes from our Lord's lips, and meditate upon it.

**1st.** Consider the magnitude of the debt owed by the servant. The Evangelist says: "The kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a king who would take an account of his servants. And when he had begun to take the account one was brought to him that owed him ten thousand talents." (v. 23, 24.) The Jewish talent was equal to about nineteen hundred dollars of our money, and the servant owed ten thousand of those talents. You are amazed at the enormous amount of that servant's debt, but you do not think how your own debt is mounting up. You have lived twenty or thirty years perhaps, or even sixty or eighty. You can count the years of your age, but are you able to count up the thoughts and words of one single year? Yet according to our Lord's own dictum you will have to give an account of every word. Can you reckon up the good inspirations, the graces you have received in the course of one year only? Yet you will have to give an account of all those graces. Every moment of your life is a gift from God; how many of those gifts have you misused by employing them in the service of sin, by living in sin? If you have to give an account of all this to your Lord, will your debt be found to be much less than that of the servant in the parable? And shall you be much better off than he was, since our Lord proceeds to say that "he had not wherewith to pay"? Have you anything wherewith to pay? Do not all that you are, all that you have, your body and soul, your goods and chattels already belong to God, independently of this debt? O miserable man! Nothing remains to you but to fall on your knees like the servant in the Gospel and implore the Lord: "Have patience with me." How many times have you already proffered that petition, and how often has it been true of you what Jesus says: "The lord of that servant being moved with pity, let him go and forgave him that debt." (v. 27.) But you continue to contract fresh debts, forgetting that even God's mercy and patience will come to an end at last.

**2d.** Consider the extreme unmercifulness of the servant. "But when that servant was gone out, he found

one of his fellow servants that owed him an hundred pence; and laying hold of him, he throttled him, saying: Pay me what thou owest. And his fellow servant falling down besought him, saying: Have patience with me and I will pay thee all. And he would not, but went and cast him into prison till he paid the debt." (v. 28-30.) Represent to yourself once again the unmerciful servant when, trembling and quaking with apprehension, he is on his knees before his master, beseeching him to have patience for the payment of the enormous debt, and then behold that same servant face to face with his debtor. You will be roused to anger and indignation at such an excessive want of compassion. His conduct will appear incomprehensible, almost incredible in your eyes. And yet, perhaps, you greatly resemble that servant. How often in the Sacrament of Penance you have prayed: Lord have patience with me! And the Lord has had compassion, and forgiven you all your debt. But alas! when you go forth from the presence of that merciful Lord, when you leave the confessional, when you rise up from the holy table, there meets you a fellow servant, one who has done you a slight wrong, who has said a few thoughtless words about you, who has committed some unkind act in your regard. What is his debt compared with yours? What are a hundred pence—not as much as twenty dollars—compared with ten thousand talents? What is it to offend a man, a sinner, compared with offending, as you have done, the triune God? And yet while the Creator of Heaven and earth forgives you, who are but dust and ashes, all your debt, and by His kindness preserves you from the eternal prison of hell, you lay hands on your debtor, you throttle him, not indeed with your hands, but with your tongue and in your heart. You demand complete compensation, a humble apology, and God knows what else, otherwise you will not forgive him! Are you not ashamed of showing indignation at the unmerciful servant in the Gospel? Ought you not rather to lay to heart the words our Lord added: "Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt because thou be-

soughtest Me; shouldst not thou then have had compassion also on thy fellow servant, even as I had compassion on thee?" (v. 32, 33.)

**3d.** Consider the punishment of the unmerciful servant. The Evangelist tells us: "And his lord being angry delivered him to the torturers until he paid all his debt." (v. 34.) The unfortunate man had already obtained forgiveness, he had received remission of all his debt, and now he had lost all through his love of revenge. His own unmercifulness was the means of casting him into the self-same prison from which his lord's mercifulness had kept him. Weigh this well, my soul. No forgiveness, no absolution, no sacrifice, no prayer avails you aught as long as you cherish enmity and revenge in your heart. He who will not forgive shall not be forgiven. He who is unmerciful like the wicked servant, shall be punished as he was. Hence the Apostle admonishes us: "Let all bitterness and anger and indignation and clamor and blasphemy be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another; merciful, forgiving one another, even as God hath forgiven you in Christ." (Eph. iv. 32.) Delay not a single day to follow the apostolic admonition; follow it even in trifles, such as are called antipathies or susceptibilities, for your spiritual progress depends to no small extent on this. Nay more, listen to what St. Basil says on this subject: Just as no one ought to entertain a strong predilection for one individual, because that is apt to have undesirable results, so it is not right to allow oneself to take a great dislike to any one, as that, too, may be productive of the worst consequences. For as Christ requires us to love the Brethren as a mark of being His disciples, it follows as a matter of course that those who do not love their Brethren are not the disciples of Christ, are not true Religious.

MONDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY  
AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE BARREN FIG-TREE.

On the Sunday before the feast of the Pasch our Lord made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and after He had remained in the temple teaching until evening, He left the city and returned to Bethania, where He spent the night. The next morning however beheld Him again on His way to the city of David, and it was whilst pursuing that road that our Lord cursed the fig-tree that was by the wayside. St. Matthew narrates the incident in these words: "In the morning, returning into the city, He was hungry; and seeing a certain fig-tree by the wayside, He came to it, and found nothing on it but leaves only, and He saith to it: May no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever: And immediately the fig-tree withered away." (xxi. 18, 19.) Realize this incident, represent to yourself our Lord standing before the fig-tree, and consider His words and actions.

**1st.** Jesus seeks fruit on the tree. "Seeing a certain fig-tree by the way He came to it." The Creator goes to His creature, looking for fruit upon it to appease His hunger. If this tree had been endowed with sense and understanding, what would its feelings have been when it perceived its Creator approaching, in search of something. What might He be seeking? The tree stands proudly there, a well-grown, stately tree, not planted in a remote, barren spot, but on the highway, where every passer-by could see it and admire its height and fine growth, the beauty of its thick foliage. But all that is not what the Creator is now seeking. He cares not about the size of the tree or the situation it occupies; He only desires and requires one thing of it, and that is fruit. Ponder this attentively. That of which the fig-tree could

not be conscious you will one day know and feel with fear and trembling. The hour will come when your Creator, your Redeemer, your Judge will draw near to you seeking for fruit—the fruit of life eternal, and nothing else. Of all the rest He takes no notice. It is a matter of no moment to Him whether your outward appearance is beautiful or unsightly, whether you are finely developed or stunted; it is immaterial to Him whether you stood by the wayside, i.e., occupied a position of distinction and influence, or lived in obscurity and seclusion. He is only concerned about one thing—whether fruit is or is not to be found on you. Reflect upon this truth, my soul, and let this be your chief anxiety. Never lie down to rest without having gathered one fruit for life eternal, for only think, one single fig would have preserved the tree from being cursed, but that one was not found on it.

2d. Our Lord found nothing on it but leaves only. The stately tree stood by the wayside, with its thick, luxuriant foliage, and the very abundance of its leaves seemed to promise that its fruit would be equally abundant, but this expectation was not realized. Thus it is with many persons, very often in fact with the very men who have an appearance of great virtue, whom one supposes and expects to be fruitful in what is good: Priests and Religious for instance. In them our Lord finds nothing besides the leaves of pharisaical tradition, as St. Augustine says; finds nothing but the mere leaves of regal pride without the works of truth; faith alone without fruit. Ask yourself therefore, ask yourself seriously, if you are a fig-tree of this description, abounding in leaves but destitute of fruit. You are perhaps much esteemed by your fellow men; your natural gifts, your talents, your external activity attracts approval and applause; you may have the reputation of being a good preacher, an able missionary, an excellent schoolmaster, an admirable instructor of the young, but after all, those qualities are nothing more than leaves. Those things have their value, but only in as far as all we do is done for God, and in the day of judgment our God will certainly not ask whether we are fluent

orators or clever workers. He will ask, as we read in the Imitation, "not what we have read, but what we have done; nor how well we have spoken, but how religiously we have lived." St. Dorotheus once said to a Brother who prided himself somewhat upon his attention and care in nursing the sick: "You are, I acknowledge, an excellent and careful infirmarian, but I cannot say that I notice you to have become a good monk." Can this be said of you? Have you more leaves to boast of than fruit; more merit in man's sight than in God's sight?

**3d.** Our Lord cursed the tree. "And He saith to it: May no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And immediately the fig-tree withered away." In this admire the goodness of God while you tremble at His severity. He shows Himself to be a merciful and loving God inasmuch as He chooses an inanimate creature, incapable of feeling pain, as an object whereby to teach us what, in the strictness of His justice, He will be compelled to do to His rational creatures if they bear no fruit, if they are satisfied with the mere appearance of sanctity. In that case the just God who was ready to pour out the plenitude of His benediction upon His creature, who had already for years lavished on him blessings and graces, cannot do otherwise than utter the curse, address to him the terrible words: "Away, you cursed!" Would to God that this withered fig-tree might not prove a useless teacher to you, as it was for the people of Israel. Begin at once, begin this very day to bear fruit, that you may escape the fate of that hapless tree. Do not say to yourself that it is not the time for figs yet; St. Mark tells us that this was so in the case before us; the Lord came before the time, He came, as He Himself says, like a thief in the night; and should He so come to you and find you destitute of fruit, then you will fare no better than the tree of which for your warning it is recorded: "And immediately the fig-tree withered away."

**TUESDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY  
AFTER PENTECOST.****ON THE PALM-TREE AS AN EMBLEM OF THE TRUE  
CHRISTIAN.**

You will have seen from yesterday's meditation that if you desire ultimately to enter with our Lord into the heavenly Jerusalem, you must before all else take heed that you are not an unfruitful fig-tree. The tree by the wayside was designed to act as a warning to you. To-day you are invited to direct your attention to another tree which likewise played a considerable part on the occasion of our Lord's journey to Jerusalem, the palm-tree. This tree contributed to enhance the grandeur of our Lord's entry into the city, and consequently it is presented to your view in order to encourage, not to alarm you. The palm is the model of the true Christian, it is the type of the just man.

**1st.** Consider the saying of St. Jerome, "The just shall flourish as the palm-tree." Now the palm is a tree of very tall and slender growth. Without ever bending in the least, or drooping towards the ground, it shoots upwards with its crown of branches. What a beautiful emblem of the true Christian, and pre-eminently of the Priest and Religious, we have in this graceful tree! Does not the just man aspire to rise ever higher, does he not strive after what is perfect, yearn for the things of Heaven without ever allowing himself to be swayed by the spirit of the world, weighed downwards by the burden of sin, warped by corrupt proclivities? Nothing avails to arrest him in his endeavor thus to rise. No temptation, no affliction has power to bend him, no suffering, no opposition casts him down, the spirit of tepidity does not check his progress; for never, as St. Bernard remarks, does the just man think



he has attained his goal, never does he say: it is enough; so far and no further. No, he hungers and thirsts after justice, and could he live for ever, he would for ever strive with all his powers to attain greater perfection. Ask yourself, my soul, if you are like the palm-tree, tending continually upwards. Or do you belong to the number of those who say to themselves, So long as I save my soul, I need not exert myself to attain greater sanctity? O listen to what the devout Gerson answers to those who speak thus: Such persons have every reason to fear lest they should finally be cast away, like the foolish virgins who thoughtlessly gave themselves up to slumber, or the idle servant who buried the talent entrusted to him instead of trading with it. And if you are a Religious, hear what St. Thomas says: He who does not strive diligently and to the utmost of his power after perfection is no true Religious, because he does not do the one thing for which he embraced the Religious state.

**2d.** St. Jerome adds: "The just strike their roots deep into the ground." It is a peculiarity of the palm-tree that its roots, which are of a bitter flavor, go deep down into the earth, and that it strikes root far better in a poor than in a rich soil. The deeper those roots can go, and the poorer the ground in which it is planted, the more the tree flourishes, the more verdant are its leaves, the taller is its stem, the more abundant and luxuriant are its branches. Here again we have a beauteous type of the just man, of the Priest, of the monk. If their aspirations after perfection are to be crowned with success, if they are to bear fair blossoms, then they must strike deep root in a meagre soil, they must practise humility and mortification. The man who intends to build a lofty tower must first lay a deep foundation, and he who would ascend to the summit of a high mountain must not shrink from encountering exertion and fatigue; in like manner, my soul, it is impossible for you to reach the summit of perfection unless you lay a solid foundation of humility, and make the necessary efforts by the practice of mortification and self-renunciation. St. Cyprian, himself an eminent saint,

declares humility to be the foundation of all sanctity; and how essential mortification is to the attainment of perfection we learn from St. Jerome, who says: In proportion as thou doest violence to thyself wilt thou make progress. Now ask yourself, my soul, do you in this respect resemble the palm-tree, do you strike deep root, and love a meagre soil?

**3d.** The third note of the just man which St. Jerome mentions is this: "The just will, like the palm, produce wide branches and abundant fruit." In these words he indicates the special characteristics of the palm, that though its stem is rough and its root bitter, the wealth of leaves that form its crown are none the less verdant and luxuriant in their growth; they form an object pleasing to the eye, and are a welcome sight to the heated traveller in search of a shady resting-place. Such ought to be your character, O Christian; towards yourself harsh and austere, towards yourself severe and unyielding, but not towards others. A pleasing and attractive crown of leaves must grow from and surmount the bitter root, the rough stem. Thus all saints have been; strict to themselves, lenient towards others; harsh to their own body, gentle towards their fellow men; bitter to themselves, that is, weaned from all earthly pleasures, but not on that account marring the enjoyment of their Brethren. They were like trees, affording refreshing shade to others, whilst they themselves bore the sun's hottest beams, for this is precisely the distinguishing mark of sanctity: charity is its bloom and its fruit.

Are you like the palm-tree in this respect? Can the words of the Imitation be reversed in your case: "We would have others strictly corrected but will not be corrected ourselves. The large liberty of others displeases us, and yet we would not be denied what we ask. We will that others shall be bound by laws and we suffer not ourselves to be in any wise restrained." (*Imit. B. i. ch. 16.*)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-FIRST  
SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE HOUSEHOLDER AND HIS VINEYARD.

Behold our Lord, subsequently to His entry into Jerusalem, standing erect in the temple, uttering those wonderful, weighty and impressive truths whereby He designed once more before His death to dispel the spiritual darkness of the Jews. He spoke in vain. Those deluded men would not be enlightened; their one absorbing thought was how they might compass the death of Him who was even then dispensing to them the Word of Life. And it was at that very time that the Lord, standing in His divine majesty before the Pharisees who were thinking to put Him to death, related the well-known parable of the householder and his vineyard, which contained a sentence of condemnation for His hearers. Imagine that you see the Redeemer, His eye—that of an omniscient Judge—fixed on the obdurate Jews, whilst He narrates the parable on which we propose to meditate to-day.

**1st.** Consider the attentive solicitude of the householder in regard to his vineyard. Our Lord says: "There was a man, an householder, who planted a vineyard and made a hedge round about it, and dug in it a press, and built a tower; and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a strange country." (St. Matt. xxi. 33.) The householder is God: "the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel" (Is. v. 7), it is the synagogue. With what loving care the divine Householder watched over this vineyard! The hedge that He made round about it was the protection and defence wherewith He guarded Israel from all the assaults of its enemies. He dug a winepress in the vineyard, the ten commandments graven by His own finger

on two tables of stone, so that beneath their pressure, under the yoke of the law, the delicious juice might be pressed out, charity to God and to one's neighbor might be evoked from the hearts of the children of Israel, who were the grapes of that vineyard. The strong tower represents the good providence of God, which, as from a watch-tower, watched over His chosen people. Finally He let the vineyard out to husbandmen, to the priests, the ancients, the judges of the Jews, who were to cultivate the vineyard of the Lord, to till it with their salutary teaching, to plant it with virtues, to preserve it from being laid waste. How beneficent were the designs of the Most High in regard to His people! Marvel at and admire the loving kindness of the Householder; but whilst you think of the Israelites as the object of His care and providence, do not forget yourself. You are yourself a vineyard of the Lord, so is your Community, your convent; and if you consider this point you will see that in every particular all that the Lord did for Israel, He has also done for you individually. Reflect upon this truth, reflect upon it with feelings of gratitude and contrition.

**2d.** Consider the outrageous ingratitude of the husbandmen. The Evangelist continues: "When the time of the fruits drew nigh, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits thereof. And the husbandmen, laying hands on his servants, beat one and killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants more than the former, and they did to them in like manner. And last of all he sent to them, his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But the husbandmen seeing the son, said among themselves: This is the heir, come let us kill him and we shall have his inheritance. And taking him, they cast him forth out of the vineyard and killed him." (v. 34-39.) In this passage we have the whole sad story of the people of Israel. God had every reason, every right to expect fruits from so highly cultivated a vineyard: the fruits of virtue and of good works. But when He sent out His servants the prophets, they were persecuted, beaten or put to death. And when at last His own

Son came, the Son for whom the Father thought they would surely feel reverence, their behavior was not one whit better. You have already heard how the husbandmen deliberated amongst themselves. "This is the heir, the heir of the respect due to us, the heir of the authority that belongs to us, for 'all the world is gone after him'; come, let us kill him." Try to fathom the depth of the wickedness and ingratitude of the Jews, and when you have seen how with each fresh degree of impiety God's mercy appeared in greater measure, and how with each fresh degree of mercy the impiety of the Jews was heightened, strike upon your breast with compunction of heart, and acknowledge that you are not free from the guilt of those husbandmen. How often when the Lord, in order to gather the fruits of His vineyard, has inspired you with good thoughts, with holy desires, when He has spoken to you through the medium of a book, a sermon, the voice of your Superior, you have shown no respect for these servants of the Lord, you have "cast them forth" out of your heart. Nay more, when the Son Himself came to you in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, you have not revered Him as you ought, but have committed the heinous offence of which the husbandmen were guilty. Awaken within yourself heartfelt contrition, make fresh resolutions for the future, and then proceed to consider the third point.

**3d.** The chastisement which overtook the husbandmen. "When therefore the lord of the vineyard shall come, what will he do to those husbandmen?" (v. 40.) Our Lord addresses this question to the sons of Israel, and as they return the correct answer, thereby passing sentence on themselves, He confirms their verdict in these appalling words, which you, my soul, will do well to lay to heart: "Therefore I say to you that the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a nation yielding the fruits thereof." (v. 43.) This prediction was first fulfilled in the case of the Hebrew people. The "people of God," on whom the divine favors and graces made no impression, were cast away, and the vineyard of the Lord was given to

other nations, to the Gentiles. And as this utterance of our Lord was accomplished in Israel's case, so it has been and is continually fulfilled in the case of all nations, all cities, all Religious Orders and Congregations, and of every individual Christian soul who is guilty of the same sin the Jews committed. When the complaint of the Most High God spoken by the lips of His prophets: "What is there that I ought to do more to My vineyard that I have not done to it? Was it that I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes?" (Is. v. 4) begins to be true of any people or Christian Order, or Christian congregation, or of any single Christian soul, then the Lord removes the candlestick out of that place, and upon the unhappy spot the divine judgments fall; in the once beauteous and flourishing vineyard of the Lord deterioration and disorder prevail, destruction ensues, so that the prediction of the prophet—a prediction to the truth of which countless instances in history bear testimony—is fulfilled to its fullest extent: "I will make My vineyard desolate; it shall not be pruned and it shall not be digged, but briers and thorns shall come up, and I will command fulfilled to its fullest extent: "I will make My vineyard the clouds that they rain no rain on it." (Is. v. 6.) What a sad fate! May it serve as a warning to you, but pay heed to the warning at once, ere the day closes: for who knows whether the Lord may not come on the morrow to His vineyard seeking for fruits?

## THURSDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE WEDDING-GARMENT.

Represent to yourself the moment described by our Lord in the parable, when the king entered the hall where the marriage-feast was held, and surveyed the assembled guests with kindly condescension. Suddenly a frown con-

tracts his brow, the genial expression of his countenance is changed to one of grave displeasure, he descries amongst his guests one who has not on a wedding-garment. For thus we read in St. Matthew's gospel (xxii. 11): "And the king went in to see the guests, and he saw there a man who had not on a wedding-garment." Keep this scene before your mind whilst meditating on this subject.

**1st.** The wedding-garment represents sanctifying grace. The King is God the Father; the Son whose marriage-feast is held is Jesus. When He became man, the divine nature was espoused to human nature, and afterwards He celebrated His nuptials with the Church, His Bride; in that Church the marriage-feast is made ready, the holy sacraments, pre-eminently the "Sacrament of sacraments," the Holy Eucharist. And when those who were invited first, the Jews, slighted that banquet, the Gentiles were called to it, and the room, the Church of God, was filled. Rich and poor, high and low, entered alike; no one was excluded on account of race, sex or age; one condition alone was imposed on each and every one who desired to partake of the king's marriage supper: he must of necessity wear a wedding-garment, i.e., he must put off the old man, and put on the new man; he must present himself either with the stainless robe of baptismal innocence, or with the garment of forgiveness obtained in the Sacrament of Penance. Thus it will be seen that the wedding-garment is nothing else than sanctifying grace, which alone gives us the right, renders us worthy to sit down at the heavenly banquet, worthy to partake of the table of the Lord here below, and hereafter to enjoy to all eternity the feast of celestial felicity. Are you also arrayed in the wedding-garment? And if not, are you not afraid of the King's angry countenance, of the look of wrath He fixed on the delinquent in the parable?

**2d.** Consider the wedding-garment more closely; that is to say, consider what the wedding-garment, what sanctifying grace really is. Bethink yourself of the first man, after God had "formed him out of the slime of the earth," before He had breathed into him the breath of

life, and made him a living soul. He might unquestionably have endowed him—imagine for a moment that it was so—with a merely natural soul. Possessed of such a soul Adam would have been nothing more than a natural man. But God did not create man in the order of nature simply; He raised him to a higher state, to the supernatural order, for He did not breathe into Adam's body a purely natural soul, but a soul that was endowed with sanctifying grace; consequently a soul equipped with higher properties and capabilities, a soul ennobled, made to God's image, and bearing in itself some portion of the divine nature. Yet it must not be supposed that through the gift of sanctifying grace the soul was so transformed as to become another, no it does not lose its identity, but it is changed; it is the same soul ennobled, made more like unto God, nearer to His image and semblance. The life given to the soul with sanctifying grace is a higher, a supernatural, to a certain extent a divine life; when this grace is lacking to the soul, the soul is dead, dead to God, dead for Heaven, for it lacks the divine element that renders it worthy of union with God, it lacks the heavenly quality which makes it fit for Heaven. In order to understand this better, think of a wild apple tree. If it is grafted with a shoot of a choice kind of apple, the original tree remains, but its nature is changed; from a wild apple tree it becomes a cultivated one, and is fit to be transplanted from the wood where it grew to the garden of the royal palace. And in like manner you who are in yourself a wild fruit-tree, by the operation of sanctifying grace are grafted and made a good tree, deserving of a place in the garden of God, that is, in His Church here below and in His Heaven above. Meditate attentively on the nature of this wondrous grace, for what it essentially is can be felt and experienced better than expressed in words; then pray with the great ascetic: "O Lord my God, who hast created me after Thine own image and likeness, grant me this grace which Thou hast shown to be so great, and so necessary to salvation." (Imit. B. iii. ch. 55.)



**3d.** Consider the question which the king addresses to the guest: "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding-garment?" (v. 12.) The mere entrance into the banqueting-hall, the mere fact of being a guest is not enough by any means. Your being a member of the Church, and claiming for yourself the name of Christian and Catholic will certainly not suffice to save you from the pitiless sentence pronounced by the king: "Cast him into the exterior darkness." (v. 13.) One thing alone protects you from that terrible fate, and that is the wedding-garment. Whosoever has once entered into the hall where the marriage-feast is held, i.e., the Church, must have that garment. There is no excuse that can be alleged for him who has it not, for mark that the culprit makes no reply to the king's inquiry. The Gospel narrative simply says: "He was silent." No wonder at that! We know that it is customary in the east to present every one who is invited to the royal table with a court dress, called a *caftan*, and thus even the most poverty-stricken individual is enabled to appear at a marriage in habiliments fitted for the occasion. Therefore the offender had no possible excuse, in fact, he condemns himself by his silence. Now, my soul, ponder this well: Were you to die now and enter in to the celestial marriage-feast without a wedding-garment, although the King of kings has bestowed on you not once only, but countless times, the magnificent apparel of sanctifying grace, what would your excuse be when the question was put to you: "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding-garment?" Do you not greatly fear lest it would also in that case be said of you: "But he was silent"? Rouse yourself then, my soul; there is yet time; go this very day, if need be, to confession, and obtain the wedding-garment for yourself.

## FRIDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE SILENCE OF THE MAN WHO HAD NOT ON A WEDDING-GARMENT.

Put yourself, my soul, in the place of the unhappy man in the parable; endeavor to realize his awful position on being asked: "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding-garment?" He could give no answer. Our Lord simply states the fact that he remained silent. How melancholy is this silence, how terrible this absence of all reply! It proclaims more loudly than words could the sentence of condemnation against the delinquent. Now imagine that this day is the one on which you will be summoned to appear before the King of Heaven, to appear before your Judge.

**1st.** Consider that our Lord addresses to you, O Christian, this question: "Friend, how camest thou in hither?" Where, He inquires of you, where is the wedding-garment of baptismal innocence wherein I once arrayed you? Or at least where is the second wedding-garment, sanctifying grace, which I gave you in the Sacrament of Penance? Where, I ask, is that garment which I purchased so dearly, which cost Me so much blood, so many wounds, so much pain and woe? Where is that garment, for the sake of safeguarding which, and preserving it from being stained, I gave you countless graces, I appointed an angel to be your protector ever at your side, I even gave you My own flesh and blood to strengthen you and enable you to defend it when your foes sought to rob you of it. You surely have not lost that precious garment, you surely have not parted with it for a mere

nothing, you surely have not cast this priceless pearl before swine? What are your feelings, my soul, when you hear these questions? Well indeed for you if you are able to return a reply to them, if you are able to say: Here is the garment which Thou gavest me; I have, it is true, soiled it with sin, but at any rate I have washed it from those stains in the waters of penance. On the other hand, woe betide you if you can give no answer, if it is said of you also: "He was silent." In order to avert from yourself this awful fate, to prevent yourself from being compelled to keep this terrible silence, do not be silent now; open your lips and speak if you are conscious of not having on the wedding-garment; confess your sins with compunction of heart this very day. And if in the coming night it should be said to you: "This night do they require thy soul of thee," you will then, when you stand in the King's presence, not be compelled to keep a self-condemnatory silence.

2d. The King of Heaven addresses the question: "Friend, how camest thou in hither?" more especially to you who are a Religious. Several saints, such as Cyprian, Jerome and Bernard, term the taking of vows a second baptism, and theologians, amongst them St. Thomas of Aquin, expressly declare that in making his religious profession, as in baptism, entire remission of all previous sin is obtained, so that were the newly-professed monk to die at the close of the ceremony he would go straight to Heaven. Remember that some day the heavenly Monarch will ask you: "How camest thou in hither?" Have you come in wearing the wedding-garment, which of My infinite charity I gave you a second time, after you had lost the first? Thousands have longed for a similar favor and it has been denied them; the privilege of receiving the grace of baptism a second time was only granted to you. I chose you out of thousands, I granted you the honor of sitting at the heavenly banquet very near to Myself; I conferred on you many graces and guarded you from many dangers and occasions of sin, in order that you might keep safe and spotless the wedding-garment which

I bestowed on you when you took your solemn vows; it would indeed argue unpardonable carelessness if you appeared before Me without a wedding-garment. What response could you make to these questions, my soul? Could you joyfully answer: "Yes, Lord, I still have the robe Thou gavest me; I have kept my vows, I have been faithful to Thee"; or must it after all be said of you: "He was silent." Far be this from you! There is yet time. You can still avert this dire calamity if only you bewail your past faithlessness, if you now begin to show yourself to be a good monk, keeping your Rule with exactitude in every detail. For he who keeps his Rule will also keep his wedding-garment; he will not be compelled to keep silence, for we read in the Scriptures that "an obedient man shall speak of victory." (Prov. xxi. 28.)

**3d.** The King will also address the question to you, O Priest: "Friend, how camest thou in hither?" Have you come in wearing the spotless wedding-garment in which He arrayed you on the day of your ordination? No royal robe is so precious, no imperial purple is so grand as the sacerdotal vestment. With it a man is invested with a dignity to which earth can offer no parallel, powers are conferred on him which the angels might well envy him. Have you preserved pure and undefiled the wedding-garment which entitled you daily to take your seat—and that in the place of honor—at the heavenly banquet? Or is it stained by self-interest, torn by human respect and self-love, or perhaps altogether lost through grievous sin? What have you got to answer to these queries? Alas, perhaps were you an ordinary Christian, were you a simple Religious you might stand before the King and "speak of victory"; but in your character of Priest you will be forced to remain silent, for so responsible is this office, that as St. Chrysostom says, even St. Paul, in spite of all his signal advantages and splendid gifts, trembled and was afraid because of this sublime office. You also must fear and tremble, but do so now, for then you will not have to be silent before the King. Beware lest you accomplish the duties of your

sacred calling carelessly and without fear of God; avoid with salutary caution the dangers that are special to your vocation, and never forget these words, which, if you observe faithfully, you may be sure that you will not lose your wedding-garment: "The conversation of the Priest should not be with the vulgar and common ways of men, but with the angels in Heaven, or with perfect men upon earth." (Imit. B. iv. ch. 6.)

## SATURDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE UNHAPPY APOSTLE JUDAS.

While in the temple at Jerusalem our Lord was engaged in scattering the celestial seed of His wondrous doctrine in the hearts of His hearers, the Pharisees, their hearts inflamed with anger, plotted how they might be revenged upon Him. Every word our Lord uttered, instead of being a medicine for their diseased souls, only envenomed their passions the more, and strengthened them in their determination to put Him to death at any cost. But how were they to get Him into their power? They feared the people. Yet alas! there was one individual ready and willing to deliver Jesus into their hands, the miserable traitor Judas. Contemplate him awhile, watch the conflict going on within his breast, a conflict between good and evil, between treachery and fidelity, a conflict in which he finally succumbed.

**1st.** Why did our Lord tolerate the traitor in His company? He knew full well all the sinister designs that filled Judas' mind, He was quite aware that the traitor only awaited an opportune moment to deliver his Master to His enemies, and yet He tolerated him about His person. See how long-suffering our Lord is! The Good Shepherd saw daily, saw with the utmost sorrow the

ravening wolf going about amongst the sheep of His flock, with the vile intention of attacking and rending to pieces not one of the sheep, but the Shepherd Himself, and with divine longanimity He bore that daily grief. Admire the marvellous charity of our God, and consider in this meditation, as St. Augustine exhorts us to do, how we ought always to be prepared, even when we enter the most sacred state, to bear patiently with the ungodly, and not to be irritated by them, but to persevere unflinchingly in the service of God, as did the other apostles. Almost everywhere a Judas is to be met with, and God permits that it should be so in order that the godly may have more abundant occasion to practise meekness, patience, charity and many other virtues which would never be called into play were there none who persecuted, calumniated or deceived them. Have you up to this time acquiesced in these wise designs of God? Or are you perhaps in your family, your Community, amongst those with whom you associate, some such member, whom our Lord only tolerates as an ordeal for the better ones.

**2d.** Consider what a terribly ignominious fate the wretched apostle prepares for his Master when he resolves to sell Him for thirty pieces of silver! What contempt for Him this displays! Such is the paltry price at which the disciple values his Master, the creature His Creator, the servant the Lord of Heaven and of earth. It was the law amongst the Jews that if any one killed a slave, he was to pay a fine of thirty pieces of silver to the owner of that slave. Thus He who came to deliver us from the slavery of sin was valued at the same rate as a common slave. Man was so precious in His sight that He did not deem His own blood too costly a price to pay for his ransom, and man counts his Redeemer of no more value than thirty pieces of silver! You feel indignant at this, my soul, but alas! you do not bethink yourself how often, for a very much lower price, for a momentary gratification of the senses, for even some lesser gain, an unjust advantage, a trifling act of revenge, and so forth, you have sold your God; for the sake of human praise you

have delivered Him up to His enemies, and for mere human respect, for absolutely nothing, that is, you have betrayed your Master. Oh do not be indignant with the apostle, be indignant with yourself.

3d. Consider that what makes Judas' conduct so revolting to us, is the double part he played, his actual and pretended relations to our Lord. The Pharisees did, it is true, hate the Redeemer more intensely, the executioners treated Him with greater barbarity, Herod undoubtedly despised Him more completely than Judas did, yet in all the history of our Lord's Passion no name stands out in darker colors than that of Judas; not one of our Lord's enemies appears in such an unfavorable light, not one inspires us with such repulsion as the unhappy traitor. This is easily explained. The snake, the adder nursed in the bosom, which turns against its benefactor, has always been regarded as more odious than the wolf which attacks a man openly. Judas was such a snake in our Lord's bosom, nurtured by His charity. He sat at table with the Saviour, he enjoyed the privilege of intercourse with Him, he was called by the name of friend; outwardly he posed as a submissive disciple and trusted apostle, and all the while he was our Lord's chief enemy, the worst of traitors. When you consider all this, and your heart burns with holy indignation against the faithless friend and hypocritical apostle, then remember that every Priest, every Religious, in a word every Christian who leads a sinful life, plays a similar part. In such persons you will trace all the distinctive features of Judas himself; you will not detect any difference between him and them. Now if you feel abhorrence for the Judas of history, feel equal abhorrence for those who are his counterparts in the present day, and take good heed lest you yourself should be one of them.

## THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE DAY.

In order to touch and arouse the obdurate hearts of the Jews, our Lord, after His solemn entry into Jerusalem, related in the temple, as we have seen, the parable of the king's marriage-feast, and as a warning to His hearers, He added the words: "Many are called, but few are chosen." (St. Matt. xxii. 14.) Picture to yourself the sacred Teacher of Israel, standing there in all His majesty; He, the Good Shepherd, utters in a loud voice those admonitory words. Then consider what follows.

**1st.** "Then the Pharisees going, consulted among themselves how to ensnare Him in His speech." (v. 15.) Thus that is all the result produced by our Lord's impressive discourse; fresh iniquity of a deeper dye! Observe, as St. Chrysostom remarks, that little word *then*. Then they went away when they had heard the words of salvation; at the very time when they ought to have entered into their own heart, when they ought to have repented of their sins, marvelled at the loving kindness of the Lord, trembled at the fate which threatened to overtake them, precisely at that time, in that decisive moment which might have been the turning-point of their lives, their thoughts ran on fresh schemes of malice and guile: they meditated how they could entrap the innocent Jesus! Truly indeed did Solomon say: "The wicked man when he is come into the depth of sins, contemneth." (Prov. xviii. 3.) Then he no longer heeds his misdeeds, he troubles not himself about the chastisement impending over him, or the divine wrath—he runs headlong on the road to perdition. How often we see this to be the case if we look around us! However, my soul, you must remember that no man falls into this awful state except through his own fault. We become indifferent in trifling



matters at first, then gradually we go on to what is more important; we remain indifferent in spite of every exhortation and warning on the part of our Superiors, our Confessor, nay even of God Himself; and before he is aware, a man reaches the point of which Solomon speaks: "The wicked man when he is come into the depth of sins, contemneth"; he becomes so callous that nothing more makes any impression on him. Be on your guard against this spirit of indifference even in what appears most trifling, and forget not that there is no condition more dangerous for the Priest and Religious, than carelessness in the matters that concern salvation.

2d. "And they sent to him their disciples with the Herodians, saying: Master, we know that Thou art a true speaker, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest Thou for any man; for Thou dost not regard the person of men." (v. 16.) St. Chrysostom well explains this laudatory speech from the lips of our Lord's enemies when he says, "That is the way with hypocrites; their first lie is to praise those whom they seek to ruin. Through their praise and flattery the Pharisees think they will entrap our Lord and entice Him to perdition, whereas He, on the contrary, did His utmost to rescue them from perdition by means of severe reprobation, embodied in the form of a parable." Here, my soul, you may learn a salutary lesson. The man who praises you is not always your friend, still less is he who blames you invariably your enemy. David knew how true this is: "The just man shall correct me in mercy and shall reprove me, but let not the sinner's oil fatten my head." (Ps. cxl. 5.) The unction here spoken of is said by St. Augustine to be flattery, the fulsome praise which only serves to strengthen and confirm us in our folly and error, according to the prophet's words: "O my people, they that call thee blessed, the same deceive thee." (Is. iii. 12.) Ponder this, and never forget the wise maxim of the learned Solomon: "Better are the wounds of a friend than the kisses of an enemy." (Prov. xxvii. 6.)

**3d.** "Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." (v. 21.) Such was our Lord's decision when He had caused a coin of the tribute, stamped with the emperor's image, to be shown Him. This speech disconcerted the Jews. Their wiles were frustrated by the wisdom of the Lord. Neither could the Herodians, the adherents of the emperor, whom the Pharisees had purposely brought with them, take exception at His answer, for He had recognized the emperor's claim; nor could the Pharisees accuse Him of impiety towards God and the people of Israel, because our Lord had expressly acknowledged and asserted the divine rights. Pause and admire the wisdom of God, which so often brings to naught the wily plans and crafty attacks of the adversaries of God and of His Church, and do not allow yourself to be dismayed by any snare, though woven with diabolical ingenuity, spread by the enemies of God and of your salvation. Even where to the human eye every way of escape seems closed, where human understanding cannot conceive any deliverance out of the net to be possible, divine Wisdom all at once puts to confusion the projects of the ungodly. Meditate upon this to-day for your consolation, and in order that you may feel yourself safe and happy beneath this protection of the divine Wisdom, in conclusion impress upon your mind this saying of St. Hilary: "The currency issued from the imperial mint consists of pieces of money whereon the emperor's image is stamped; the coins struck in the divine mint are human beings on whom the image of God is stamped; therefore pay your gold and silver to the emperor, but reserve for God the tribute of your conscious innocence."

MONDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY  
AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS WHO WERE WAITING  
FOR THE BRIDEGROOM.

It is night. Ten virgins with lighted lamps are keeping watch, ready to go out to meet the bridegroom on the first tidings of his approach; but this nocturnal waiting is prolonged to a far later hour than was expected; it costs the virgins a struggle to keep awake; at last, overcome by drowsiness they fall asleep. Picture this scene to yourself as vividly as you can.

1st. "The kingdom of Heaven shall be like to ten virgins who taking their lamps, went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride." (St. Matt. xxv. 1.) The bridegroom here spoken of is our Lord Himself, for whom the Church upon earth is waiting with holy longing, until He shall come to conduct her, His Bride, home to the glorious marriage-feast in Heaven. According to St. Jerome's explanation the ten virgins represent individual believers, since every Christian soul may, and indeed ought, to stand in the same bridal relationship to Christ as the Church does, as a corporate body. Thus our Lord speaks of the faithful under the image of virgins who are waiting for the coming of the bridegroom. What a beautiful similitude, and what abundant matter for reflection it contains! The faithful ought to be virgin souls, pure and stainless, unsullied in faith and in morals; they ought to be betrothed to God, consecrated to Him, and as such, even among the distractions of the world, ever in readiness, ever watching, and prepared at any time to go out to meet the Bridegroom. They must never be drowsy or apathetic, they must never forget their true vocation and destiny, or lose

sight of them by allowing their minds to be occupied by vain and foolish fancies. Ponder upon this ideal which our Lord proposes to us as the type of the true Christian, of those souls who call themselves His spouses, and ask yourself if you are not as yet very far from realizing this ideal in your own person?

**2d.** Consider that "five of them were foolish and five wise. But the foolish, having taken their lamps, did not take oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with the lamps." (v. 2-4.) All the ten are virgins, and all the ten have lamps; that is to say, they have all equally received the light of faith and sanctifying grace in the Sacrament of Baptism, consequently all are of the same rank as virgins originally; but herein lies the distinction between them. The foolish virgins have neglected to fill their lamps with oil as did the wise virgins. According to the interpretation of the Fathers, by the oil is signified all that it is incumbent on the soul herself to do in order to keep alive the flame of faith and of grace which was kindled by God; it represents active faith and charity which manifest themselves in acts of virtue and good works. Those virgins, says St. Jerome, have oil, who adorn themselves with works that are the fruit of faith, whereas those have no oil who, although they appear to have the same faith, are barren of all good works. Consider this, my soul. In your character of Christian you are already a virgin consecrated to the service of God, nay, if you are a Priest or a Religious you may regard yourself in a more especial sense as the betrothed bride of Christ; but how is it with you in respect to oil, without which your state of virginity, your nuptial union with our Lord is of no value, without which the lamp of faith is useless? For as St. James tells us: "Faith without works is dead" (ch. ii. 17); it is like a lamp wherein there is no oil.

**3d.** "And the bridegroom tarrying, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made: Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him." (v. 5, 6.) The delay in the coming of the bridegroom is, St. Hilary explains, the time given for repentance; the.

sleep of those who are watching represents the Christians' rest in the grave until all the dead are awakened. At midnight, at the hour, that is, when it is least anticipated, the trumpet blast will suddenly awaken the sleepers; they will arise from their graves and go forth to meet the Bridegroom, who will come on the clouds of Heaven. But how great the difference that will then be apparent between the wise and the foolish virgins! The foolish now perceive with horror that their lamps, being devoid of oil, will not burn; they perceive that their faith without works is dead, that their vocation to the Religious state without the fulfilment of all that their vocation involves avails them naught; and despite the fact that they are called virgins, that they bear the name of Christians, that they have a lamp in their possession, despite, that is, the beauty of their vocation, they are doomed to perdition. Meanwhile the wise virgins are ready; the Bridegroom's unexpected advent does not take them by surprise, for, as St. Augustine remarks, he who has kept himself ready until the time appointed for sleep, i.e., until death, shall not be found unready when at midnight the cry resounds by which we all shall be awakened. Think of that great awakening each morning when you arise from sleep; say to yourself: Once more God gives me time to fill my lamp with the oil of good works, in order that I may not be overwhelmed with consternation when the final awakening—the great day of judgment—has come.

## TUESDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE CONDUCT OF THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS AT THE COMING OF THE BRIDEGROOM.

Endeavor to realize as fully as possible the scene of confusion and excitement that ensued when the slumbering virgins were suddenly startled out of their sleep by the cry: "Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him." (St. Matt. xv. 6.) How quickly they all sprang up and took their lamps, for they were conscious that all their past would be a failure if they were to miss the right moment for going forth to greet the bridegroom.

**1st.** "Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise: Give us of your oil for our lamps are gone out." (v. 7, 8.) The frightened virgins, startled out of their sleep, instantly took their lamps; that is to say, at the hour of the universal awakening all the disembodied spirits will return to their respective bodies, and make trial of their light, test it in order to ascertain whether, beside the faith in which they departed this life, they possess a sufficient amount of the oil of good works to keep their lamps alight. Whilst the wise virgins, who were wise in time, discover to their joy that they have enough of this oil, the foolish virgins only perceive with dismay their lack of it when it is too late, and resort to entreaties, endeavoring to supply their own deficiency by the merits of others. But mark this attentively; this resource fails them now. As the time for action is past, so the time for successful supplication is gone by; no intercession of the saints, no vicarious satisfaction on the part of the just avails any longer; solely by the good works, the merits each one severally brings with him, is the destiny of that individual decided by the Bridegroom.

Now do you understand, my soul, why those virgins are called foolish? Is it not true foolishness to neglect to provide for ourselves, to neglect invoking the aid of others, when our efforts and their supplications would be of avail, and only to rouse ourselves to action, to call upon others when nothing we or they can do is of any use? It is not the five virgins in the parable alone who act thus foolishly, perhaps you do so too. Examine yourself on this point.

**2d.** Consider the answer which the wise virgins make to the petition of the others; they refuse, saying: "Lest perhaps there be not enough for us and for you." (v. 9.) Observe, as St. Jerome here remarks, that the wise virgins did not answer thus out of avarice, but out of fear. Alas! the judgment is so strict that even the good feel cause for apprehension, the more advanced in sanctity fear and tremble, they are not free from dread lest their oil should not hold out. Listen to what the Apostle Paul himself said: "I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet I am not hereby justified, but he that judgeth me is the Lord." (I. Cor. iv. 4.) Do we not see how the most eminent saints looked forward with trembling to the great day of account? Yet you, who are not even blameless as an ordinary Christian, much less are you a saint, feel little or no apprehension! A man like St. Paul feared lest his oil should prove insufficient, he who had labored more than all the apostles; and you with your few scanty drops, look forward unconcernedly to the advent of the Bridegroom! "Thou thunderest forth over my head Thy judgments, O Lord, and Thou shakest all my bones with fear and trembling, and my soul is terrified exceedingly. I stand amazed and consider: for the heavens are not pure in Thy sight. If in the angels Thou hast found sin and hast not spared them, what will become of me?" (Imit. B. iii. ch. 14.) So speaks the great ascetic in holy fear and dread, and you, who have scarcely made a step on the path of asceticism, feel so little apprehension at the thought of the judgment to come! You must indeed be a foolish virgin if it is thus with you.

**3d.** Consider the end. The Bridegroom came, and we

are told: "They that were ready went in with Him to the marriage, and the door was shut. But at last came also the other virgins, saying: Lord, Lord, open to us. But He answering said: Amen I say unto you, I know you not." (v. 10-12.) Just as unspeakable as is the mercy of our God before the judgment, even so inexorable is His strict justice subsequently to it. Our Lord does not know those who arrive so late; He did not see them in His suite. For Jesus to say He knows not the soul, is for her equivalent to the sentence of damnation. Oh how these virgins are to be commiserated! Try to realize, my soul, the torture, the bitter agony of their position. Virgins, called to and destined for a place at the celestial marriage feast, chosen to escort the heavenly Bridegroom, they stand there forlorn, thrust out into the darkness of night; the door of the banqueting hall, where they were intended—that is the saddest part of the story—to have a place, is closed against them for evermore. May their pitiful fate stimulate you, my soul, to lay to heart the exhortation wherewith our Lord closes this parable: "Watch ye therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour." (v. 13.)

## WEDNESDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON JUDAS MEDITATING THE BETRAYAL OF OUR LORD.

Our Lord had preached often enough and long enough to the Jews. In the marvellously beautiful and impressive parables which He delivered in the temple at Jerusalem after His final entry into that city, He once more put forth all the fulness of His divine wisdom for the purpose of winning the obdurate hearts of His hearers, but in vain. They were not touched either by the picture of the wedding-guest gnashing his teeth in a dark dun-



geon, nor by the despairing lamentations of the foolish virgins. Thereupon our Lord left them to themselves, and prepared to spend the last days of His life upon earth in tranquil intercourse with His apostles. But even in that limited number there was one whose heart was equally hardened—it was Judas. Picture to yourself that miserable apostle when, wandering about alone, he brooded over his project of betraying his Master, and struggled with the inspirations of his better nature, which would have deterred him from so base an act.

**1st.** It was not one of our Lord's averred adversaries who was plotting against Him this blackest, most atrocious of crimes, nor even one of the number of the seventy-two disciples, but one of the apostles; one, consequently, whom our Lord had called to the highest vocation, one on whom He had lavished His graces and favors, one whom He had actually called His friend, whom He had endowed with power to work miracles and whom He had constantly invited to sit at table with Him. Judas, while thus basking in the beams of the Sun of justice, enjoying the full sunshine of the Saviour's grace, carries about in his heart designs of treachery. You are astonished at this, my soul, but you do not reflect that there are many who do as Judas did, and that you yourself may, after all, not be as unlike him as you imagine. But how can that be? Are you not a friend of God, a child of God? Do you not as a Priest partake daily of the eucharistic feast, or as a Religious do you not enjoy this privilege several times in the week? Has not our Lord chosen you and called you to His service? Yet you carry about with you designs of treachery. For some weeks, for some days past a particular temptation has beset you; you have been more exposed to occasions of sin, you have held intercourse with undesirable, if not dangerous companions. As yet matters have not come to the worst. Still do you not see that it was not only shameful on Judas' part to commit an act of treachery, it was disgraceful to cherish the idea of it, and to enter into negotiations of a treacherous nature. The general

who engages in battle with the enemy as soon as the fortress under his command is attacked, is true to his trust, but not so he who holds treasonable communication with him even though he does not go so far as to surrender the fortress to him. Consider that, and perhaps it will make you more careful how you trifle with sin.

**2d.** Consider that avarice was the principal motive that induced Judas to turn traitor; it is to this vice that the apostle's terrible fall was due. St. Paul does well to warn the faithful against it. This he does in the First Epistle to Timothy (ch. vi. 9, 10): "They that will become rich fall into temptation and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires which drown men into destruction and perdition. For the desire of money is the root of all evils; which some coveting have erred from the faith, and have entangled themselves in many sorrows." The case of Judas and of many others whose fall is recorded in the annals of the Church affords confirmation of the Apostle's words. Nay more, this vice has not only caused the ruin of individuals, as it brought about our Lord's death, it has even brought the Church into peril of destruction, as in the time when simony prevailed. Take heed therefore to hold aloof from this hideous vice. Only think, you who are a Priest, what it must be for our Lord, who lived in poverty and esteemed poverty most highly, to rest under the lowly appearance of a morsel of bread, in the hands of a Priest who utters his own condemnation when he repeats the Lavabo: *Ne perdas, Deus, cum impiis vitam meam, in quorum manibus iniquitates sunt*, in whose hands are iniquities (Ps. xxv. 10), mammon, unjustly, covetously accumulated. If you are a Religious, and in consequence of your vow of poverty are removed from all opportunity of indulging any tendency to avarice, still do not flatter yourself that you need have no fear of meeting with Judas' fate, since there may be among the inmates of the cloister some who, though they cannot indulge the vice of avarice and covetousness in regard to what is costly and precious, are however not free from it,

but indulge this evil propensity in respect to minor matters and trifling possessions, manifesting plainly that they have not uprooted their former passion but only changed its form.

3d. Consider that the apostle thus meditating treachery is a warning for you. Seeing him meditative and thoughtful, disturbed and agitated, you would naturally be far more inclined to suppose that he, an apostle, the friend of our Lord, was engrossed by affectionate concern for the Master whose life was in danger; in fact you would find it difficult to believe that his thoughts and reflections were given to maturing a scheme of treachery. But it often is so in ordinary life. We see men whom we esteem most highly, whom we regard as pillars of the Church, and who indeed were so, suddenly waver and fall; we see our Brothers and Sisters, who far surpassed us in sanctity, contrary to all anticipation all at once walking in strange and evil ways. We refuse at first to believe it, we should be so glad to find ourselves mistaken, but alas! it is no mistake, it is stern reality; and you will do well to lay to heart to-day this truth, that no man as long as he is in this life, is secure against falling. Lucifer was in Heaven and he fell; Adam lived in paradise and he fell; Judas enjoyed intimate intercourse with our Lord Himself and yet he fell. "Stars have fallen from heaven, and I, who am but dust, how can I presume? They whose works seemed worthy to be praised have fallen to the very lowest, and those who were wont to feed upon the Bread of Angels, I have seen delighted with the husks of swine." (Imit. B. iii. ch. 14.) Thus Thomas à Kempis expresses the truth which is proposed to-day for your meditation; weigh it attentively, and then acknowledging your poverty and weakness, cast yourself in all humility at the Saviour's feet, and confess: "There is then no sanctity, if Thou, O Lord, withdraw Thy hand. No wisdom profits if Thou cease to govern; no strength avails if Thou cease to uphold; no chastity is secure if Thou protect it not."

## THURSDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE PREPARATIONS MADE FOR THE LAST SUPPER.

The time was drawing nearer and nearer when our Lord would have to leave His beloved disciples. But before parting from them, He desired once more to eat the pasch with them, the last pasch. Imagine as far as you can the frame of mind with which the God-man made preparation, or rather gave directions how preparation was to be made for the last paschal feast; imagine the feelings, half sad, half joyful that filled His soul, knowing as He did everything beforehand, foreseeing the vast importance of all that was to happen at the approaching festival.

**1st.** Consider that it was enjoined upon the Jews as an obligation under the Old Law to keep the feast of the Passover. Although our Lord was about to annul the Old Covenant and substitute the New Dispensation in its place, yet it was His will to conform to the Old Law and therefore—mark this, for it is a thought fertile in instruction for us—He determined to close the Old Dispensation and inaugurate the new with an act of obedience. Now observe that as our Lord was already threatened with imprisonment and death, in order to be sure of fulfilling the commandment, He made all the arrangements for celebrating the paschal feast earlier than was customary, and told His disciples beforehand how they could most quickly and easily prepare the paschal lamb. Herein our Lord gives us a beautiful example not merely of obedience in general, He also teaches us in particular that not only ought we to practise obedience whenever it is a strict and bounden duty, but that we ought also to fulfil the command laid upon us even when

exceptional difficulties might excuse us from accomplishing it, or unforeseen circumstances afford a just reason for obtaining a dispensation. From our Lord's example we learn that we ought to provide betimes for the removal of the impediments that may stand in the way of our obedience. This strict and perfect manner of yielding obedience is a note of the true Christian, the perfect Religious, who is far removed from a perfunctory or servile spirit. For instance, supposing some task is allotted you, some act enjoined upon you to which your inclination is strongly opposed, but which is highly advantageous to your neighbor, your Community, or your convent. You find that an obstacle has arisen which would absolve you from the duty of obedience, but which would deprive your neighbor, your convent, of the anticipated advantage or profit. How will you act in such a case if you are perfect? Undoubtedly you will do as Jesus did, and in order to fulfil the command in spite of all difficulties, you will set about your work more promptly and at an earlier date than you would otherwise have done, knowing that there is scarcely anything that we can do more pleasing to God than, undeterred by obstacles, to act on the precept of the prophet: "Obedience is better than sacrifices, and to harken rather than to offer the fat of rams." (I. Kings xv. 22.)

**2d.** Observe to whom our Lord entrusts the preparation of the paschal lamb. We read in St. Luke: "And He sent Peter and John, saying: Go and prepare for us the pasch that we may eat." (St. Luke xxii. 8.) Our Lord's choice of these two apostles in particular to make the necessary preparations for the Lord's Supper is not without a mystic signification. Peter is the man of faith, the rock of unwavering belief, John is the disciple of charity. Hence Peter and John are sent to make ready the paschal lamb, for the purpose of teaching us that we can prepare ourselves in no better manner for the reception of the Holy Eucharist, than by awaking beforehand within our breast the faith of St. Peter, and kindling in our heart the love of St. John. Were you always

to approach the altar with the lively faith of St. Peter, did you realize fully to yourself who it is who comes to you, and could your cold heart catch something of St. John's glowing charity, surely you would have less need to lament in the words of the Imitation: "I am often ashamed and confounded with myself, O Lord, that I approach with such lukewarmness and coldness to Thine altar and to the table of Holy Communion; that I remain so dry and without affection of heart, that I am not wholly set on fire in Thy presence, O my God, nor so mightily drawn and affected as many devout persons have been." (Imit. B. iv. ch. 14.) Those devout persons sent Peter and John previously to prepare the feast, they made acts of lively faith and awakened their charity in pious meditation. Why do you not do likewise, my soul?

**3d.** Consider in whose house our Lord directs the paschal feast to be prepared. "And He said to them: Behold, as you go into the city, there shall meet you a man carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. And you shall say to the good man of the house: The Master saith to thee, where is the guest-chamber where I may eat the pasch with My disciples?" (v. 10, 11.) This simple inquiry is sufficient. The mere message from our Lord, "I desire to eat the pasch in thy house," is quite enough to determine the owner of the house to place his large, well-furnished dining-room entirely at the Master's disposal. Learn a lesson from this man. A hint is all that is needed to induce him to set open his whole house to our Lord; and for you a little thing is enough to induce you to give admittance to the evil one; you leave our Lord to stand and knock at the door, you have no time to attend to Him, you are not prepared to receive Him. Do you not know that the true Christian, the good Priest, the perfect Religious ought always to have a large dining-room furnished, that he ought at all times and in all places to be ready to receive our Lord? That the inquiry, "Where is the guest-chamber where I may eat the pasch with My disciples," ought never to cause him embarrassment or con-

fusion? My soul, it is your earnest desire to be holy here and happy hereafter. Well, you may confidently hope that this desire of your heart shall be fulfilled, at the moment when you go to Communion after making a good preparation; let your dispositions at that moment not be transitory, but permanent; that is to say be ready at any moment, like the good man in the Gospel, to receive our Lord, and then you may be certain that He will enter into your house.

## FRIDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON OUR LORD AS THE TRUE PASCHAL LAMB.

To-day imagine yourself present in the dining-room at Jerusalem. Jesus and His apostles are already assembled around the table; the paschal lamb is placed before our Lord. Absorbed by the thoughts which the sight of that paschal lamb, with its mystic meaning, suggests to Him, He at length breaks the solemn silence, and says:

1st. "With desire have I desired to eat this Pasch with you, before I suffer." (St. Luke xxii. 15.) Our Lord desired, with a twofold desire, as God and as man, to keep this paschal feast. At this feast the greatest miracle of the divine omnipotence and love was to be wrought: the institution of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, wherein the glory of our bounteous and merciful God is revealed in the highest degree, and for this reason as God He earnestly desired this Passover. And the sacred humanity of Christ desired it no less earnestly; the God-man had nothing more nearly at heart than complete surrender to the will of His heavenly Father, the accomplishment of whose will was His meat and drink; and now precisely in this sacrament He would be able to offer

Himself to His heavenly Father to the fullest extent as a spotless, sacred Victim. In your meditation enter into this deeper cause of our Lord's longing to eat this pasch, and then ask yourself: Do I thus long from the bottom of my heart for the eucharistic feast? Is the hour in which I am to draw near to the Lord's table a joyful, a welcome one for me? It is the very absence of a burning desire, a holy longing for that supersubstantial bread which is the reason why your Communions are so unfruitful. St. Augustine says that this bread must be eaten with the hunger of the soul, of the inner man; if you feel no such hunger, if you only approach the Lord's table out of habit or from compulsion, that heavenly food will no more nourish your soul than earthly food which is forced upon you against your will does any good to your body.

**2d.** Consider what were the thoughts and feelings that may be supposed to have crowded in upon our Lord at the sight of the paschal lamb. Must not the thought have suggested itself to Him: This lamb is typical of Myself. In the same way that it was slaughtered, prepared and roasted at the fire, so to-morrow I must be slain, pitifully mangled and lacerated and tortured in the fire of terrible sufferings. This lamb was divided into pieces without a single bone being broken, and the same will be done to-morrow to My body; not a bone of it shall be broken, but it shall be torn with rods and scourges, pierced with nails and lance, and body and soul shall be forcibly torn asunder. With haste, as we are commanded to eat this lamb, My enemies will destroy Me; and as bitter herbs are eaten together with the lamb that is roasted, a bitter beverage, vinegar and gall, will be offered to Me. Whilst imagining these thoughts to have passed through the mind of the Saviour while He gazed on the paschal lamb, consider whether at the sight of the Lamb of God which you have either given yourself, or you have received from the Priest's hand, whether hearing at the same time the words: "Behold the Lamb of God!" thoughts of a painful nature have not arisen in



your mind. O Lamb of God, you have been ready to exclaim, I commiserate Thee! As once upon the cross, so now how cruelly Thou wilt be tortured and grieved in my heart by my relapses into sin! The Ven. Father Rodriguez relates how an eminent servant of God, happening one day to be present at the Mass of a Priest who led a sinful life, saw upon the paten in the place of the consecrated Host, a sweet and amiable Child, who, when the time came for the Priest's Communion, turned away His face and resisted with hands and feet, to prevent the Priest from receiving Him in Communion. Upon the servant of God informing the Priest of what he had seen, it was the means of his conversion and amendment. May this meditation stimulate you to fresh efforts, that you may never have reason to look upon the Lamb of God again with sorrowful but rather with joyous sentiments.

**3d.** Consider the striking contrast between God and man at the moment of the institution of the Lord's Supper. Our Lord is seated in the guest-chamber at Jerusalem, burning with charity towards man; and in the excess of that charity He works a stupendous miracle at which the angels gaze in awe and amazement; He gives His whole self to man, and in order to unite Himself to him in the closest union, He constitutes Himself the spiritual nourishment of man. Immerse yourself in thought in the depths of this mystery, this miracle of miracles, and when your heart has caught some measure of warmth from the furnace of divine love, then turn your attention to man, for whose sake our Lord has done such great things. See how those very men have already hired assassins to arrest Him; see how they burn, not like Him with charity, but with hate; see how even at the Lord's table the wolf is lurking, lying in wait to rend the divine Lamb; look at all this, and your wonder at Jesus' love for man, for such individuals as those, will grow ever more intense. Yet if you feel holy indignation against these degenerate Pharisees, do not overlook the fact that this race still lives on amongst us. As in the chamber at Jerusalem, so our Lord is present in

the tabernacle, He abides there continually with the self-same charity and loving kindness; and look at the men around Him, look at those who even sit with Him at the eucharistic feast, who dwell under the same roof with Him! Do this, and then perhaps your wrath against the Pharisees will evaporate, and grief and contrition will fill your heart at the thought of your own thanklessness, your own coldness, your own want of love, standing out in such striking contrast to the infinite, inconceivable charity of Him who was the true Paschal Lamb.

## SATURDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON DEATH.

To-day let your meditation be upon death, as it is represented to us in the holy Gospels. The Evangelists describe three kinds of death, on which we shall do well to meditate for our soul's welfare: The death of Dives the plutocrat and of Lazarus the beggar, the death of Judas, and the death of St. John the Baptist. Betake yourself in spirit to the death-bed of each of these individuals in turn.

**1st.** The first of these is described in our Lord's own words, reported by St. Luke (ch. xvi. 22): "And it came to pass that the beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died, and he was buried in hell." Imagine that you see that rich man upon his death-bed. How soft and luxurious is his couch, what elegance and splendor surround the dying man; all that wealth can purchase is at his command. The physicians, attentive and obsequious, stand beside his bed; numerous menials are at hand ready to carry out the slightest wish of their expiring mas-

ter. But alas! of what use is all this to him? The bed of softest down seems to him hard and uneasy; the display of wealth, the gorgeous adornments of the sick-chamber do but intensify its horrors. And all these officious persons about him—how irksome and unnecessary is their presence! Not one of them has power to keep death at bay, not one has power to assuage the pangs of his newly-awakened conscience, not one has power to quench the flames of hell which he feels already consuming him. Alas poor Dives! thou hast in thy death indeed become a beggar. And in the meantime outside at the foot of the stairs, on the marble pavement, there lies a real beggar who is also at the last gasp. His death-bed is hard and poverty-stricken in the extreme, he dies forsaken and alone. And yet, O happy mendicant! to thee death is a welcome release; that which makes the rich man poor and miserable makes thee rich and happy; instead of the dogs that come about thee, the only beings who show thee any compassion, thou seest already the angels approaching to carry thee to Abraham's bosom. Now say, my soul, which of these two death-beds would you choose for yourself? That of the poor man, you will assuredly answer. Well then, be poor in your lifetime. Be poor in spirit, if God has given you wealth; be poor both in spirit and in your outward circumstances, if poverty is your lot on earth or if you have made yourself poor for Christ's sake. And if amongst my readers there should be a Religious who finds his vow of voluntary poverty weigh hard on him, let him think of death, which is not bitter but sweet for those who have already parted with all things in this world.

2d. Consider next the death of Judas. St. Matthew relates the circumstances in these words: "Then Judas who betrayed Him seeing that he was condemned, repenting himself, brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the ancients, saying: I have sinned in betraying innocent blood. But they said: What is that to us? look thou to it. And casting down the pieces of silver in the temple he departed, and went

and hanged himself with an halter." (ch. xxvii. 3-5.) To this St. Luke adds: "And being hanged he burst asunder in the midst and all his bowels gushed out." (Acts i. 18.) What a horrible, awful death! Imagine the unhappy apostle making the preparations for suicide in some lonely spot, a prey to the keenest sorrow and remorse—the remorse unfortunately of despair—in frenzied desperation fastening the rope to a tree. Such is the appalling, the deplorable end of one of the apostles, of one chosen for great things, one on whom graces had been lavished. Here you have an image of the end awaiting the Priest or Religious who has lived in sin, despite his sacred office and high calling, and who struggles against grace to the very last. When death stares him in the face his conscience awakens; an agonized repentance rends his soul, but it is the repentance of despair. All that his dying gaze rests upon is a tacit reproach to him, the crucifix, his breviary, the priestly cassock, the monk's habit, the very bed whereon he lies; all the sounds that reach his ear, words intended for his consolation, the sweet name of Jesus, his own baptismal name, his name in Religion, the mention of his Guardian Angel, each of these is a fresh pang of conscience. He would fain turn to God in penitence, but it is too late; he has abused His grace too long; he dies full of sorrow, it is true, he even dies with sentiments of bitter sorrow for sin, never felt before, but it is only the repentance of Judas, and therefore to him must be applied the lamentation uttered by St. Augustine: "We must shed many tears over our Brother's unhappy end. He promised with his lips what he repudiated in his heart. As he lived so he died."

**3d.** Consider finally the death of St. John Baptist. St. Mark tells us: "Sending an executioner, he [Herod] commanded that his head should be brought in a dish. And he beheaded him in the prison." (St. Mark vi. 27.) Undeniably, as far as externals went, that was a wretched, deplorable way to die! The Baptist's life was sacrificed to the whims of a dancing-girl. He met his death at the

hand of the common executioner. His dying chamber is a dungeon, wherein his last sigh is breathed unheard by mortal ear. Yet this is a death precious in the sight of the Lord. John dies a victim of his calling, a victim of his fidelity towards God, of his observance of the divine law; he dies a martyr's death. That is indeed the most desirable of deaths, a glorious passage from earth to Heaven. St. Francis, St. Antony and countless others earnestly desired such a death as this, and if, my soul, a similar desire springs up in your breast, remember that it only rests with you to die the death of a martyr at least in a spiritual sense. For this nothing more is needed than to die as a Confessor of the Faith. Wherefore be constantly during your life a confessor of your faith and then as such you will die. And if you have the privilege of being a Religious, only take heed that you live as a perfect Religious to your life's end, and then at your death you can claim a martyr's palm. For St. Bernard says the Religious state is a perpetual martyrdom; martyrdom of a milder form, it is true, than that terrible and violent death, when the body is hewn in pieces with the sword, but more tedious and difficult to bear because of its long duration. The true Religious who is diligent in the practice of mortification and self-denial, can with as much right as any martyr take on his lips the words of the Psalmist: "For Thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are counted as sheep for the slaughter." (Ps. xliii. 22.) Can you say this? If so, you may look forward in joyous anticipation to a glorious death like that of St. John the Baptist.

## THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE RAISING TO LIFE OF THE RULER'S DAUGHTER.

To-day a touching scene is placed before your eyes; you are shown a father in deep affliction, bowed down with grief, standing in our Lord's presence, adoring Him and beseeching Him: "Lord, my daughter is even now dead; but come, lay Thy hand upon her and she shall live." (St. Matt. ix. 18.) It is Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue who speaks thus, and it is his little daughter, twelve years of age, who is now lying dead in his house.

1st. Consider that our Lord is known to have raised from the dead three persons, of each of whom an account is expressly given by the Evangelists. He recalled the young man at Naim to life in the public streets, in the sight of all the city; Lazarus was raised from the grave in the presence of a considerable number of Jews, whereas the damsel of whom we now speak lay dead within her father's house, hidden from the sight of the people, and her miraculous resuscitation took place in the solitude of her own chamber. All this is not without a mystic meaning. The two first instances are symbolical of open transgressors, whereas Jairus' daughter represents the unhappy sinner whose soul is dead, destroyed by secret sins, whilst still informing its mortal tenement. Every one could see the youth lying dead upon his bier; every one knew that Lazarus was already deposited in the sepulchre, but no one could tell from looking at the ruler's house that there was a dead body within its walls. How many Christians, how many Priests and Religious of whom one would never suspect such a thing, are symbolized by this deceased maiden! Every one considers them to be living, living the inner, spiritual life; their dress, their state, their voca-

tion, their sermons and the sacred functions they perform, all give color to this supposition. But alas! this dwelling, externally so fair and attractive, conceals in its interior a mournful sight, a corpse, for the soul is dead, sins that no human eye can discern have destroyed its life. How lamentable a condition to be in! To dispense the word of life, the sacraments, to wear the dress of those who live for God and walk with God, and yet to be spiritually dead! Is it possible that you, O reader, belong to the number of those unfortunate individuals? If so, proceed to consider what follows.

2d. As soon as the father found his little daughter to be dead, without a moment's delay he hastened to our Lord, and entreated His help. He did not let matters go too far, he did not wait until decomposition had set in—or as was the case with Lazarus, until the interment had taken place; no, he sets out immediately to seek our Lord's assistance. If you know your soul to be dead, if you are conscious that mortal sin of which the world knows nothing, a sin which is perhaps as yet only committed in intention, has caused its death, oh do not delay a moment; go at once, go quickly to Jesus and confess to Him: "Lord, my daughter, my soul, is even now dead." Besides, you must know that you cannot keep the fact secret for any length of time. A dead body soon begins to decay, and its presence is soon perceived through the effluvium emanating from it. In like manner the change that has been effected in a Priest or Religious is soon discerned and scandal is given by it. Nothing is more prejudicial, nothing is more fatal than postponement, than false shame. "He that hideth his sins shall not prosper," we read in the Book of Proverbs (xxviii. 13) and Cassian says: "The evil suggestions of the devil have only power to harm us as long as they are concealed within the heart. For as soon as the wicked thoughts are disclosed they begin to fade away, and before the decisive sentence is pronounced upon them, the most hideous of these serpents slinks away, as if it had been dragged out of its dark lurking-place into the light of day by the force of confession." Now, my

soul, let it be your steadfast resolution, if you should fall into any sin which might destroy or even imperil the life of grace within you, to go at once to confession; and though the blush of shame covers your countenance, bear the humiliation bravely, and you will never have cause to repent the step.

**3d.** Consider that before He raised the maiden who was dead our Lord did two things. He commanded the noisy minstrels, and the multitude making a rout before the house to be quiet; He then spoke encouragingly to the father, overwhelmed by the apparent hopelessness of his affliction: "Fear not, He said to him, only believe and she shall be safe." (St. Luke viii. 50.) Herein our Lord gives us a salutary lesson. If you really desire to be raised from the dead, if you truly wish to rise up from the couch of sin, to enter upon a new life and make good progress, see that you hold aloof above all from the minstrels. By these we are to understand flatterers, who watch around the dead soul; they are the whispers breathed into your ear by the evil enemy or by his confederates, your former companions in sin, who would fain persuade you that you have done quite enough; that there is no necessity for such excessive penance, one must not entirely break off with one's old friends, and so on. Hesitate not to command these minstrels to keep silence. Moreover take heed to avoid the fault into which Jairus fell, that of giving way to overgreat despondency and sadness, for this is only too apt to drive beginners in penance back to the sinful life of yore. "This sadness," St. Francis says, "gives the devil much pleasure, for it makes it easy for him either to cast the Christian into dejection or despair, or to re-awaken in him the craving for the pleasures of the world." Wherefore, my soul, while you bewail your past sins, be not overmuch dismayed on account of them, but listen to what we are told in the Imitation: "Keep thy mind calm and even, and gird thyself to a greater endurance. All is not rendered vain if thou feel thyself often afflicted or grievously tempted. Thou art man, and not God; thou art flesh, and not an angel." (Imit. B. iii. ch. 57.)



## MONDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE WASHING OF FEET.

Fix your eyes in imagination to-day on the persons assembled in the guest-chamber on Mount Sion, where the Last Supper is to be held. All present had just taken their places at table, our Lord and the twelve apostles, when our Lord rose up, and to the extreme surprise of His disciples, took a basin of water and prepared to wash their feet. Bear this scene in mind during your meditation.

1st. St. John thus narrates the incident: "Knowing that the Father had given Him all things into His hands, and that He came from God and goeth to God; He riseth from supper and layeth aside His garments, and having taken a towel, girdeth Himself." (ch. xiii. 3, 4.) Thus our Lord acts as a servant, binding a linen towel round His waist, as servants did before washing the feet of the guests, if they were personages of distinction, according to the custom then prevalent in the east. Here let your mind dwell particularly upon this point on which St. John lays stress, that our Lord acted thus in full consciousness of His supreme dignity. Although He knew that He came from God and was about to go to God, He did not do as would be expected of one who was God and Lord, but fulfilled the office of a man and a servant. Do not fail to learn a lesson of the Saviour. He, the greatest and highest, supreme in Heaven and on earth, humbles Himself on this occasion to such an extent in order to teach us that the higher the dignity we fill, the more lowly we ought to be. The Wise Man of old says: "The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God." (Ecclus. iii. 20.) If, my soul, you do not do so, if you pride yourself on your posi-

tion, your gifts, even your virtues, listen to the words of St. Bonaventure: "The proud man is nothing else than a thief, for he appropriates to himself what is the property of another. He takes honor to himself which belongs to God alone." Even St. Francis dreaded falling into this fault, so much so indeed that he frequently sent up this petition: "Lord, if it is Thy good pleasure to bestow Thy graces upon me, be Thou Thyself the guardian of them, for I cannot trust myself; I am an arch-robber who will very probably seize for himself all the riches that are Thine." If a saint, and a saint so remarkable for his humility, speaks in this manner, what ought you to say, O haughty sinner?

2d. Consider further the way in which our Lord acted. "After that, He putteth water into a basin and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded." (v. 5.) St. Chrysostom, commenting on this passage, bids us observe that after every one had taken his place at table, our Lord alone rises up. He does not content Himself with simply washing the disciples' feet. He makes the same preparations for the task as a servant would have done. He girds Himself and Himself fills the basin with water. He gives no orders to any one else, He does all Himself, alone and unaided. Reflect upon this, my soul. Jesus is not only humble in mind and in word, but also in deed; He practises the virtue of humility in its integrity and perfection. His will is to minister, without being ministered to in the slightest degree. He has every right to issue commands and give directions, but He does not choose to do so. Although He is Lord and Master, He acts as if He were a menial and a minister. What is your conduct in this respect? Probably the very reverse of what it ought to be. Perhaps you would rather command than obey, you prefer to rule rather than to serve. Take example to-day from our Lord, and often recall the saying of Brother Giles: "If any one desires to attain and retain perfect peace and tranquillity, let him see in every one his superior and consider himself to be subordinate and subject to all."

**3d.** Consider that our Lord accomplishes this humility in a mystic sense for the benefit of the whole world in a far more exalted and marvellous manner. In order to prepare a salutary and purifying laver wherein all mankind might be cleansed, He laid aside the splendid and lustrous robe of glory that was His in Heaven, and girded Himself with the despicable garb of humility that He might, in the form of a servant, wash our souls clean in His own blood. When He was crucified He was stripped of His garments, and after His death He was wrapped in linen cloths, His whole Passion being for our spiritual cleansing. Meditate attentively upon this higher, spiritual signification of the washing of feet; give thanks to God for having prepared for you a laver wherein you may be purified and escape immersion in the pool of brimstone in hell. Forget not however, that pride and arrogance with all their lamentable consequences, were conquered by our Lord by means of abjection and humility; and urged by gratitude to Him, take the resolution to-day not to allow a single day to pass without making at least one act of humility.

## **TUESDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.**

### **ON ST. PETER'S CONDUCT AT THE WASHING OF FEET.**

Imagine yourself to be present at the washing of feet and observe the conduct of the prince of the apostles towards our Lord on this occasion. He cannot, he will not entertain the idea of his Master washing his feet, rendering this menial service to him, a servant, a sinner. At the sight of such humility a holy alarm takes possession of him, and in his profound astonishment he exclaims: "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" (St. John xiii. 6.)

**1st.** Consider the deep reverence which the apostle felt for our Lord. This was, according to St. Cyril's explanation, the chief reason why Peter opposed his Mas-

ter's design: "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?" the apostle asks in amazement, as if to say: Thou, my God, the Lord of hosts, at whose name every knee should bow! Dost Thou wash my feet, wash the feet of one such as I am, a sinner, a servant? Dost Thou wash them with those wonder-working hands, the hands that have given health to the sick, that have made the deaf to hear, the blind to see, and even restored life to the dead? Oh never, never can I agree to that; I ought rather to esteem it a great favor to be allowed to wash Thy feet. Pause and reflect on these respectful sentiments that fill the apostle's heart, and ask yourself: Where is the reverence I ought to feel when like Peter, I stand in the presence of my Lord, and that same Lord condescends to wash, not my feet merely, but to cleanse my sin-stained soul. Nor does He content Himself with thus ministering to me as in the washing of feet. He makes Himself the spiritual, supernatural nourishment of my soul in Holy Communion. Well may you ask where is the reverence that it behooves you to feel. How indifferent, how careless is your state of mind too often, when you present yourself before the Lord Jesus! How seldom it occurs to you to take on your lips the words of holy awe which we read in the Imitation: "When I consider Thy greatness, O Lord, and my own vileness, I tremble exceedingly and am confounded in myself. For if I come not, I fly from life; and if I intrude unworthily, I incur Thy displeasure. What then shall I do, my God, my helper, and my counsellor in necessities?" (Imit. B. iv. ch. 6.)

**2d.** Consider the similarity of St. Peter's sentiments with those of St. John the Baptist. As in this instance the apostle will not consent that our Lord should wash his feet, and considers it to be far more fitting for the Redeemer to permit him to render Him that service, so the holy Baptist replied to our Lord's request that he would baptize Him with no less humility and astonishment: "I ought, he said, to be baptized by Thee, and comest Thou to me?" (St. Matt. iii. 14.) The great precursor did not regard himself as worthy to loose the latchet of our Lord's

shoes, much less to administer baptism to Him. How different are truly great men, how different are great saints to ourselves! They always have too low an opinion of themselves, and we always think too well of ourselves. They always think too much honor is shown them, whereas we complain of the scanty recognition our merits meet with. They consider themselves unworthy of the divine favor and the grace of God, while we are at a loss to understand His dealings if He withdraws from us the least measure of His consolations. When shall we learn to follow the wise counsels of the great master of the spiritual life: "Thou hast not anything in which thou canst glory, but many things for which thou oughtest to hold thyself of small repute; for thou art much weaker than thou art able to comprehend. Let nothing then of all thou doest appear much to thee; let nothing seem great, nothing precious or admirable, nothing worthy of esteem, nothing high, nothing truly praiseworthy or desirable but what is eternal." (Imit. B. iii. ch. 4.)

**3d.** Consider that sanctity and humility increase in equal proportion. The holier a man is, the humbler he is. The greater a man is in reality, the more lowly is his opinion of himself. The prince of the apostles was more humble than his brethren in the apostolate, who let their feet be washed without a word of expostulation, and he was surpassed in the same virtue by the Blessed Virgin, the Queen of Apostles; whilst the King and Sovereign of all saints, Jesus our Lord, outshines every one in humility as completely as the light of the sun exceeds that of all the stars in the firmament of Heaven. It is of Him, who is unequalled in grandeur and majesty, that man first learnt true humility, and she who approached most nearly to Him in sanctity and sublimity was also the humblest of creatures. Think well on this, my soul. The further a man has advanced, says St. Bernard, the less progress he counts himself to have made. Now if you would fain know how and why this is so, listen to the words which one who attained a very high degree of humility, the Seraphic St. Francis, once uttered: "It is

my firm conviction that the greatest of all sinners, had he received the same graces which have been bestowed upon me, would have made a better use of them, and shown far more gratitude for them than I have. And on the other hand I have not the slightest doubt that I should have fallen into the most terrible sins and should have become the very worst of men if God had for a single moment withdrawn from me His sustaining hand. Therefore I justly look upon myself as the greatest, the most ungrateful of sinners." Such is the manner in which the humble saint speaks of himself. We are indeed mere beginners in the practice of this virtue. In a mystic sense we quietly let our Lord wash our feet, without so much as exclaiming with the apostle in amazement at such condescension: "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?"

### WEDNESDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE ANSWER WHICH OUR LORD GAVE TO PETER AT THE  
WASHING OF FEET.

Represent to yourself our Lord, as, with His divine serenity and composure, He sets aside the objections which the apostle, agitated, astonished and greatly awestruck, makes to having his feet washed by his Master, with the simple, dignified answer: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." (St. John xiii. 7.) As yet the apostle was ignorant of the sublime signification of the washing of feet.

1st. Nor was he ignorant of that alone; he was wanting in knowledge of himself. This washing of his feet violated his sense of the veneration due to his Master, and what was more, he thought it unnecessary, he considered himself to be clean. It never entered into his

calculations that he could be capable—certainly not of treachery like that of Judas—but of denying his Master. “I will lay down my life for Thee” (v. 37), he said to our Lord. Yet he of all others required that our Lord should wash his feet, i.e., bestow His grace upon him. Here we remark in Peter a fault which we all have, the want of self-knowledge. We cannot and will not really believe that we are in need of being cleansed before we can have part with our Lord. Thus Thomas à Kempis truly says: “We cannot trust much to ourselves, because we often lack grace and discernment. There is but little light in us and this we quickly lose through negligence; many times also we perceive not that we are so blind within.” (Imit. B. ii. ch. 5.) Strive, my soul, to acquire this self-knowledge. The saints have declared it to be the highest and most useful knowledge; and St. Augustine when he prayed: “Grant, Lord, that I may know Thee,” always added the petition: “and grant that I may know myself.”

**2d.** Consider our Lord’s answer from another point of view. He does not give any explanation of what He does, but simply requires obedience on the apostle’s part. He says as much as: Let Me do as I will, for I understand what is good for thee better than thou dost thyself. Now instead of yielding and obeying in all docility, Peter says with ill-timed eagerness: “Thou shalt never wash my feet.” (v. 8.) St. Augustine says that all those who oppose the injunctions of their Superiors or condemn the divine inspirations act as Peter did. Priests and Religious who invariably take upon themselves to question the commands of those who have authority over them, who always require to be informed beforehand of the justice or the advisability of the behest, follow Peter’s example, and perhaps they also say as he did—from apparently good reasons or even pious motives: Never, never shall it be so. You must not imitate the apostle in this respect. Remember, as St. John Climacus bids us, that obedience is a spontaneous movement that does not pause to examine or to weigh reasons; it is a voluntary death

of the will, a life devoid of all curiosity, an act involving the renunciation of all deliberation. Our Lord simply demands implicit obedience from Peter; He gives him no explanation at the time; and hence we learn that one who is truly obedient does not stop to make inquiries as to what the command is and why it is binding on him; he must only make it his object to carry out with the utmost fidelity and humility what his Superior enjoins. What is your conduct in this respect?

**3d.** Consider that our Lord, desirous to induce Peter to obey, only tells him one thing, and that produces the desired result: "If I wash thee not," He says, "thou shalt have no part with Me." (v. 8.) In commenting on this passage St. Basil observes: If Peter had to hear so severe a sentence from our Lord's lips as: If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with Me, because in one thing only he deviated slightly from the path of strict obedience, and that not from the promptings of arrogance or contempt, but from a sincere reverence for his beloved Master and his God, what will those persons deserve who persistently and scornfully resist not only the commands of God, but the orders of their Superiors who are placed over them as His representatives? Lay this truth well to heart: let this one thing be enough to ensure your obedience, the knowledge that obedience is always salutary, disobedience always hurtful. Let it suffice for you to know that as St. Jerome says: Obedience is the sum total of all virtues, for it leads a man on the straight road to Christ. Therefore obey your Superiors, yield to their will when they desire to cleanse you from your faults and defects, and see that you never offer any opposition to this spiritual washing of feet, otherwise you shall have no part with the Lord Jesus.



## THURSDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE EXHORTATION OUR LORD ADDRESSED TO HIS  
DISCIPLES AFTER THE WASHING OF FEET.

After our Lord had accomplished this signal act of humility and charity towards His apostles, He again took His place at the table. We read in the Gospels: "Then after He had washed their feet and taken His garments, being sat down again, He said to them: Know you what I have done to you? You call Me Master, and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If then I being your Lord and Master have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet." (St. John xiii. 12-14.) Imagine yourself to be present in the *cœnaculum* with our Lord, and to have heard this speech from His divine lips, and then proceed to meditate on His words.

**1st.** Our Lord had out of humility and love for His apostles performed the lowest and most abject task in their regard, fulfilling the office of a menial and a slave; this He did, as He Himself said, to give them an example, "that as I have done to you, so do you also." (v. 15.) The disciples of the Lord, the children of the New Covenant, ought not to wish to govern but to serve; they ought in conformity with their Master's example to show charity towards one another, and to be ready in all humility for a mutual interchange of kind services. Thus this loving humility and humble love will here below in as far as possible do away with the distinctions between high and low, master and servant, rich and poor, and in this respect to a certain extent make earth a foretaste of Heaven. How admirable is this precept which our Lord gives us, if only we would obey it; if even in the narrower circle of the sacerdotal and religious life this genuine spirit of Christianity always prevailed, for it alone

maintains fraternal charity. According to the saying of the great St. Ambrose: "It contributes greatly to strengthen and confirm charity, if conformably to the rules of apostolic charity Christian people mutually treat one another with respect; if, each one considering the other to be superior to himself, the subordinates do their work willingly and those who are in authority are free from arrogance; if the poor man does not grudge to the rich the precedence wealth gives him, and the rich man is glad when the poor man can be placed on an equality with himself." Such is the sense in which the saintly bishop understood our Lord's maxims. You will do well to impress his words deeply upon your mind, and let yourself be taught by him.

**2d.** Consider another way in which we ought to imitate our Lord. We ought to imitate in a spiritual manner all the several actions He performed in connection with the washing of feet. As He rose up from table to wash His disciples' feet, so we ought to be ready and willing at all times and under all circumstances, at any hour of the day or the night, whether we are sitting at table or taking rest in sleep, to perform any act of fraternal charity for which an opportunity presents itself. Now each one is his own nearest neighbor, and there is no one who has a greater claim on us than our own soul. Therefore you should first of all do for it what Jesus did for His disciples. Alas, it needs first and foremost, it needs most pressingly the spiritual washing of feet, cleansing from the pollution of sin. Delay not then to render it the same service which you would not refuse to render to your neighbor, remembering that it is your nearest neighbor. Rise up from the table, from indulgence in sin; lay aside the old robe of evil habits and corrupt inclinations, gird yourself with the white towel of purity and wash your sin-stained soul with tears of penance. Perhaps while making your meditation to-day you have already formed many good resolutions as to how you will, in a spiritual manner, wash the feet of this or that fellow man, and you have never thought of yourself. Repair that omission this

very hour and above all remember that it is not only by corporal works of charity that we are to imitate our Lord's example, but we are to follow it in a spiritual sense. As St. Augustine says: "Let us confess our sins one to another, let us reciprocally forgive one another our offences, let us mutually pray for one another when we have done amiss, and thus we shall to a certain extent be able to wash one another's feet."

**3d.** Consider our Lord's concluding words: "If you know these things you shall be blessed if you do them." (v. 17.) It is on the last clause that the stress is to be laid. Merely to know these things will not make you blessed, but to know them and do them. "For," St. Chrysostom observes, "knowledge belongs to the many, but deeds to the few"; and St. Augustine says much the same: "Know this, that all can understand what is meant by following Christ, but there are not many who really follow Him." How is it with you in regard to this, my soul? See, you are a well-instructed Christian, or yet more, a Priest and a Religious. You are indeed privileged beyond many thousands. You know better than the majority of your fellow Christians what our Lord's teaching and example are; you see them carried into practice in the members of your immediate circle, those whose vocation is the same as your own; you are reminded daily, nay hourly, by word and example, by your Rule, your Breviary, by particular exhortations and instructions of this, what is really meant by following our Lord's example. Why then if you know what it behooves you to do, do you not do it? Unhappy Priest, unfortunate Religious! It is your very knowledge that will condemn you, as St. James declares: "To him therefore who knoweth to do good and doth it not, to him it is sin." (St. James iv. 17.) And our Lord delivers a similar warning, as we read in St. Luke's Gospel (xii. 47, 48): "That servant who knew the will of his lord and prepared not himself and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. And

unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom they have committed much, of him will they demand the more."

## FRIDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE MEANING ATTACHED TO THE PASCHAL LAMB OF THE  
OLD TESTAMENT IN ITS BEARING ON THAT OF THE NEW  
TESTAMENT.

Previously to instituting the wondrous paschal feast of the New Testament at the Last Supper, our Lord kept the feast of the Passover with His apostles after the manner ordained by the Old Dispensation. Imagine that you see the Saviour of the world when celebrating that last pasch with His holy apostles; before Him upon the table you behold the paschal lamb, of deep mystic meaning.

1st. Consider that this lamb was eaten in thankful remembrance of the lamb which the Israelites were commanded to eat when the Lord delivered them out of the bondage of Egypt; of the lamb by the consumption of which they strengthened their bodies for the toilsome and tedious journey to the promised land, and the blood of which, sprinkled upon the door-posts of their houses, protected the Israelites from the sword of the destroying angel when he killed the first-born of the Egyptians. Now since our Lord ate this lamb with His apostles immediately before the institution of the paschal feast of the New Testament, let us observe the beautiful and apt manner in which the Jewish paschal lamb typified that of the Christians. Is not this miraculous food of the New Covenant a memorial of the bitter Passion and death of Christ, which also delivers us from bondage, the cruel bondage of sin? Is not this supersubstantial food that

which strengthens us for the journey through the desert of this mortal life to the promised land of eternity? And is not the blood of this Divine Lamb our defence against the infernal assaults of the devil which threaten us with everlasting death? Meditate attentively upon this, my soul, ponder the beautiful signification of the paschal lamb which was eaten previously to the Last Supper, and awaken in yourself, as the pious Israelites of old used to do, sentiments of warmest gratitude for all the benefits of the redemption of which the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar is a memorial.

**2d.** Consider that the paschal lamb of the Old Testament was to be eaten with loins girded, with shoes on the feet, holding staves in the hand; moreover that it was to be eaten in haste, and with it unleavened bread and bitter herbs were to be consumed. And in that our Lord ate the paschal lamb of the Jewish law before He instituted the miraculous feast of the New Testament, He gives us a lesson which is replete with instruction. Those also who partake of the paschal lamb of the New Covenant must have their loins girded, by which is to be understood the purity that is required in them; for this same reason the priest prays before celebrating holy Mass: "Gird me with the girdle of purity. For we know that only the clean of heart shall see God." Furthermore those who eat the paschal lamb must have shoes on their feet; this denotes that steadfastness of will is requisite, the resolution to make good progress in the path of justice. They must also approach the feast holding staves in their hands, that is to say, with a firm, childlike confidence in the staff of our salvation, the cross of Christ, and the merits He won by it on our behalf. Quickly and in haste this Bread of Life must be eaten, not with tepidity, indifference or reluctance, but with holy eagerness, with delight and gladness of heart. Finally it is to be eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs; that is, with a heart free from the leaven of the world and provided with the bitter condiment of works of penance and self-denial.

Pass in review these several points, my soul, and ponder

them well, in order to ascertain whether or not you have hitherto partaken of the sacred Paschal Lamb as "an Israelite indeed."

**3d.** Consider finally that the paschal lamb was to be roasted with fire, and that nothing was to remain of it or be left over lest it should be profaned by being put to ordinary uses. Now by eating the ancient Jewish passover before instituting the feast of the New Covenant, our Lord gave us an admirable admonition, teaching us that we must before all else keep alight the glowing fire of charity for the reception of the sacred Lamb. Our hearts must be kindled and aflame with this fire so as to receive worthily this miraculous and celestial food; the fire of charity must be sufficiently powerful to consume every portion of the wondrous bread; that is to say, the spiritual nourishment whereof we have partaken ought to be so completely absorbed by the powers of the soul that the whole man, so to speak, is permeated and pervaded by that which he has eaten. Thus from thenceforth he lives only in and with and for Christ, leaving no room in his understanding or his will for the spirit of the sinful world. When Holy Scripture speaks of our God being a consuming fire (Heb. xii. 29), know that according to the teaching of St. Thomas of Aquin, Holy Communion is this all-consuming element, whereby the soul is purged from all evil passions and impure affections. Now since only one spark is needed to kindle this fire, rise up, my soul, kindle the divine flame with the spark of your charity, kindle this fire which will burn up all in you that is impure; for it is in the lack of this spark of charity, in your coldness and dryness that you ought to seek the reason wherefore you experience so little of the warm glow of the "consuming fire" when you go to Holy Communion.

## SATURDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### ON THE LAST WARNING OUR LORD ADDRESSED TO HIS DISCIPLES.

The Last Supper is ended. For the last time the God-man has been sitting in His human form and condition amid His apostles; and now, when He is about to leave them, He gives them a final admonition as they go up to the Mount of Olives. Imagine that you see the Saviour of mankind, surrounded by the apostles, as they wend their way thither in the stillness of the tranquil night, in a sad and melancholy frame of mind. Listen to what our Lord says to them:

**1st.** "All you shall be scandalized in Me this night." (St. Matt. xxvi. 31.) This is as much as to say, you will not endure with Me to the end, but at the sight of My suffering, of My abasement, you will be perplexed and waver. And as our Lord predicted so it all came to pass. The apostles began to grow faint-hearted and to despond; doubt to a greater or less extent took possession of their minds when they saw their Master enduring such terrible torture, and saw Him laid in the sepulchre. The warning our Lord gave them, His prediction of what would happen was not superfluous, for they might have remembered that He had foretold it all to them. If, my soul, you feel astonished, if you wonder how it could have come to pass, how it could have been possible that the apostles, who had witnessed so many miracles, who had held intercourse with our Lord for so long, who had heard all His instructions, could in one single night lose their faith in their Master, consider that you are not one whit better than they were. How countless are the graces which our

Lord has already granted to you in the course of your life, how often have you experienced His fatherly loving kindness, nay even perceived the marvellous interposition of His good providence on your behalf; and yet—when the night of suffering, of temptation, of desolation closes in on you, what becomes of your trust in God, your courage, your fortitude? They have vanished, and you begin to give way to exaggerated complaining, to doubt, to mistrust. It is with you as with the Royal Psalmist of old; he exclaims: “In my abundance I said I shall never be moved!” Then the season of trial came and he was forced to confess: “Thou turnedst Thy face from me and I became troubled.” (Ps. xxix. 7, 8.) Therefore, my soul see that you lay to heart our Lord’s admonition.

**2d.** Consider that one amongst the apostles will not let himself be included in the number of those who need our Lord’s warning; he says to Him with the utmost assurance: “Although all shall be scandalized in Thee, I will never be scandalized.” (v. 33.). This assertion uttered by St. Peter is, St. Jerome tells us, neither prompted by presumption nor to be stigmatized as untrue. It is rather an act of fidelity, a display of ardent affection for our Lord, one however which betrays too little mistrust of the frailty of human nature, and too great confidence in being able to effect in his own unaided strength that for which no small measure of divine assistance is indispensable: perseverance in justice. Peter relied on his own strength, consequently in the hour of conflict he was left to his own resources for his humiliation and our edification. May this also be a warning to you, my soul! Through an excess of zeal Peter is carried away and falls into overweening self-confidence which is no less dangerous a fault than overgreat mistrust of self. In this respect choose rather to follow the example of another Apostle, who said: “I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me.” (Phil. iv. 13.) Peter forgot this last clause and he expiated his omission by a grievous fall; how often has this been the case with you, my soul? You too in the fervor of your zeal, in a transport of ardent charity, have said: Never



again shall I fall; from henceforth I have done with sin; you were in earnest, as the apostle was, you meant what you said, your words were really the outcome of holy and pious devotion. And yet perhaps that self-same night you denied your Lord, and why? Because you forgot what St. Paul tells us: "Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God." (II. Cor. iii. 5.)

**3d.** Consider this time-honored tradition and deeply rooted opinion in the Church, that the Blessed Virgin was the only individual who at the time of our Lord's Passion and during His rest in the sepulchre never wavered in her belief that He would rise again from the dead. It is on this account that Saturday is specially dedicated to her in remembrance of her constancy and fidelity. Of all our Lord's disciples and adherents she alone was not scandalized in Him; she was also the purest and humblest of all, and here we have the reason of her invincible perseverance. Weigh this well, my soul. You have now in your hours of meditation gone through the whole of our Lord's life, and doubtless you have formed many excellent resolutions. If you wish to persevere in the good path whereon you have entered, if you hope that a time may never come, a "night" in which you are scandalized in Christ, take heed that you remain chaste and humble. On the great day of final judgment—which will form the subject of your meditation to-morrow—it will be made manifest that all who were scandalized because of our Lord, all who have had doubts or have even fallen away altogether from the faith, were wanting in chastity or in humility, that some sin against one or other of these virtues invariably preceded the taking scandal in Christ. See therefore that you are always pure and humble like the Blessed Virgin, and you will obtain the grace to persevere unto the end as she did.

## THE SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT.

### ON THE SIGNS WHICH SHALL PRECEDE THE FINAL JUDGMENT.

To appear unto men as "the goodness and kindness of God" was the object of the first coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to earth. Hitherto you have contemplated your God in this character, that of a loving, merciful Friend of mankind dispensing blessings and salvation. Now turn your attention to the second advent of God upon earth; it will be a very different one, it will be an advent attended by terror and consternation, accompanied by holy awe and horror. Even the signs which shall precede the second coming of Christ are appalling. Listen to what is written concerning them.

1st. "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea and of the waves. Men withering away for fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world." (St. Luke xxi. 25, 26.) Realize, if you can, the situation in which these men find themselves, or still better, imagine yourself to be one of them. Suspecting nothing, some go to their business, others to their amusements; one meditates acts of impiety and iniquity, another commits such acts, when suddenly—"as lightning cometh out of the east and appeareth even unto the west" (St. Matt. xxiv. 27), so unexpectedly, so quickly the awful day comes. With horror men contemplate the fearful signs and portents which appear in the heavens, and listen to the deafening roar of the tumultuous waves of the ocean; who can count the blanched countenances, the despairing ejaculations, who can conceive the distress that prevails everywhere, for our Lord Himself says: "There shall be then great tribulation, such as hath not been from the

beginning of the world until now, neither shall be." (St. Matt. xxiv. 21.) In reading the description of this tribulation, this woe, even the thought of which makes you shudder with horror, learn to bear cheerfully the minor trials, the slight afflictions of your state and calling, which is not without an element of sadness, and is in the eyes of the world a dismal and gloomy life. For this however compensation will come, for when all the tribes of the earth shall mourn (v. 30)—(that is, according to St. Jerome's interpretation all those who have not their home in Heaven, but whose names are written in the dust of the earth for their damnation)—when the brief period of natural alarm has passed away the consolatory promise of the Lord shall be fulfilled in you: "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted." (St. Matt. v. 5.)

**2d.** Consider more closely the signs which shall appear in the Heavens. In the Gospel for to-day we read: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from Heaven and the powers of Heaven shall be moved." (v. 29.) Transport yourself in spirit to that terrible time at which it will please the omnipotent God to destroy the worlds He formerly created. What a day of wrath that will be, when the orbs of Heaven will withdraw their light, as if they were ashamed of having for so long shed their radiance upon sinful man, giving him light whereby to commit the most abominable crimes. The unbelieving Jews asked of our Lord "a sign from Heaven" (St. Matt. xvi. 1); now they have what they wanted, but to their own horror and dismay. The unbelieving nation disregarded and scorned all the signs which the Son of man wrought after His first advent, but woe betide them! They will be constrained to acknowledge the signs which attend His second advent, they will be compelled to behold them with their own eyes, to behold them alas! to their own perdition; for, as St. Chrysostom remarks, the sun shall be darkened in order that the temporal darkness prevailing at the coming of their Judge, may be for the wicked an earnest and foretaste of the eternal dark-

ness which will be their portion after that second coming. Beware lest you also are numbered amongst the ungodly.

**3d.** Consider that according to the apostle's testimony the earth will ultimately be destroyed by fire. St. Peter says: "The heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of the ungodly men." (II. St. Peter iii. 7.) Thus the world is reserved for fire, reserved to be consumed by that element which has power both to destroy and to refine. As a second deluge this fire will spread over the globe, burning up everything that is meet for destruction throughout the world, while on the other hand out of its embers the materials for fashioning a new earth, an earth purified and glorified shall proceed. This fire shall consume all worldly splendor and magnificence, the treasures and riches of earth; moreover, as St. Thomas of Aquin asserts, this same fire shall burn up both the just and sinners who are alive at our Lord's coming; but with this distinction, that whereas it will serve as a means of cleansing the godly from the stains of sin if they still have any, and will afford a painless process whereby those who are already purified shall be refined and glorified, to the ungodly it will occasion agonizing tortures, the tortures of hell. The gold will come forth out of this furnace purified and refined, but the chaff will be all burnt up, according to the prediction of the Apostle, one which you will do well to treasure up in your memory as the fruit of your meditation to-day: "Other foundation can no man lay but that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be manifest, for the day of the Lord shall declare it because it shall be revealed in fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is." (I. Cor. iii. 11-13.)

**MONDAY AFTER THE SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT.****ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.**

Place before your mental vision the final judgment of mankind at the dread moment when the angels will fly to and fro to gather together all mankind from the four winds of Heaven, when the awe-inspiring blast of the trumpet sounds from the clouds and the appalling cry is heard: Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment! The resurrection of the dead has been described to us by the Apostle Paul as well as by the prophet Ezechiel; listen to their words.

**1st.** St. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, says: "The Lord Himself shall come down from Heaven with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God; and the dead who are in Christ shall rise first." (I. Thess. iv. 15.) The prophet Ezechiel portrays the dread scene of the resurrection in yet more vivid colors in the 37th chapter of his prophecies: "The hand of the Lord was upon me, and they brought me forth in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of a plain that was full of bones. . . . And he said to me, Prophecy concerning these bones, and say to them: Ye dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord. . . . And I prophesied as he had commanded me, and as I prophesied there was a noise, and behold a commotion, and the bones came together, each one to his joint. And I saw, and behold the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin was stretched out over them, but there was no spirit in them. And he said to me: Prophecy to the spirit, prophecy O son of man and say to the spirit: Thus saith the Lord God; come, Spirit, from the four winds and blow upon these slain and let them live again. And I prophesied

again as he had commanded me, and the spirit came into them and they lived; and they stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." Finally we have the authority of the Lord Himself, who confirms this prophesy when He utters these words: "Wonder not at this, for the hour cometh wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life, but they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment." (St. John v. 28, 29.) Hence it will be seen that this resurrection of the dead is foretold in the most positive manner in Holy Scripture. Those who believe in Christ must also believe in the resurrection of the dead. This truth is however calculated to inspire us with comfort as well as to awaken alarm, as we shall proceed to show.

**2d.** Consider that from our Lord's words we learn that although all the dead shall rise again, they will not all rise in the same manner. "They that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life, but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." The Apostle likewise, writing to the Corinthians, says: "We shall indeed all rise again, but we shall not all be changed." (I. Cor. xv. 51.) "The bodies of the just and godly" shall, as we read in the Book of Wisdom (ch. iii. 7), "shine, and shall run to and fro like sparks among the reeds," or, as the prophet Daniel asserts, "shine as the brightness of the firmament and as stars for all eternity," whereas the bodies of the wicked will have a most horrible and hideous appearance; vice and iniquity will have traced their disfiguring lines upon their countenances. The flesh that has been pampered in the delights of sin and unlawful pleasures, will resemble the bodies of lepers, so that the unhappy creatures, horrified at themselves, ashamed of their condition, will cry aloud, as St. John tells us in the Apocalypse (ch. vi. 16, 17) and "say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;

for the great day of their wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" Ask yourself, shall you be able to stand in that day? Will your body shine, resplendent in brightness, or will it wear an aspect of appalling hideousness? Ask yourself this, my soul, ask it now, ask it seriously, while there is yet time, and in connection with this meditation lay to heart these words of the Imitation of Christ: "Then (on the day of judgment) he will seem to have been wise in this world who learned for Christ to be a fool and despised. Then all tribulation suffered with patience will be pleasing and all iniquity shall stop her mouth. Then the flesh that has been mortified will triumph more than if it had always been nurtured in delights. Then will the mean attire shine and fine clothing appear as under a shade." (Imit. B. i. ch. 24.)

**3d.** Consider this subject of the resurrection of the dead somewhat more fully. Imagine the consternation of the ungodly when all of a sudden they recognize amongst those who have risen again certain individuals who will stand up to bring accusations against them before the divine tribunal; when the murderer describes the victim whose blood he shed, the usurer sees the widows and orphans he has oppressed, the libertine, to his dismay, discerns before him the accusing form of the once innocent maiden whom he seduced, the Religious perceives the persons whom his bad example has brought to perdition, the Priest beholds the souls who were lost through his negligence. Alas, is there indeed no longer any possibility of escape? No, certainly not; for already the Eternal God causes His voice to be heard out of Sion; He calls, as the prophet Joel predicts: "Let them arise and let the nations come up into the valley of Josaphat; for there will I sit to judge all nations round about. Put ye in the sickles, for the harvest is ripe; come and go down, for the press is full." (Joel iii. 12, 13.) And as in the beginning at the word of the Eternal the four rivers of paradise flowed out to the four quarters of the earth, so now the four winds of Heaven drive the dead who have risen from their graves to the

valley of Josaphat to appear before the divine judgment-seat, where (to quote the same prophet again) "the people shall be in grievous pains, all faces shall be made like a kettle." (Joel ii. 6.) Fancy yourself amongst those terror-stricken multitudes, imagine that you are awaiting the advent of your future Judge in the valley of Josaphat; pay attention to the reproaches and stings of conscience that you experience in the course of this meditation, for there is yet time, if you pay heed to the voice of conscience now, to prevent its accusations from making you shrink in horror from the thought of appearing in the valley of Josaphat.

## TUESDAY AFTER THE SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT.

### ON THE SIGNS OF THE SON OF MAN.

To-day you are invited to picture to yourself the scene in the valley of Josaphat when the signs of the Son of man appear in the heavens. All mankind are gathered together there, waiting in fear and trembling for the coming of the Judge. Suddenly a thrill runs through the multitudes; every eye is turned upward to the heavens, and there, flashing with the brilliance of the lightning, the sign of the Son of man, the sacred cross, is seen. Fix your gaze upon this cross while you meditate on its appearance.

1st. Consider how momentous will be this last appearance of the cross. It was a great and grand instant when Almighty God called the universe into being with a single word, when the earth was created out of nothing, and the brilliant orbs lit up the firmament of heaven. It was a great and grand instant when—"while all things were in quiet silence and the night was in the midst of her course" (Wisd. xviii. 14), the Eternal Son of God



came down to earth from Heaven for the world's redemption; yet incomparably grander and more sublime will the moment be when, in presence of all the nations of the world, in the sight of Heaven and earth, the sign of the Son of man, the holy cross suddenly shines forth, lighting up the heavens with so brilliant a refulgence that it will be seen from east to west, in every quarter of the globe. Moreover it is the Redeemer's triumphal sign, for this sign—as St. Thomas of Aquin teaches—will place in a no less striking and convincing manner before the eyes of the ungodly the just chastisements of God which they have deserved, and His great mercy which they have wantonly outraged. This sign will make known emphatically to all the world that their Judge is the self-same person whom they once nailed with such ignominy to the cross of shame; this sign finally, shining with the brilliance of the noonday sun in the sight of all mankind, will bear incontrovertible testimony to the glory that our Lord merited for Himself and for His elect by hanging on that instrument of torture. Let this thought of the Angelic Doctor sink deeply into your mind.

**2d.** Consider the consternation of the ungodly at the sight of this cross. The cross which has been to them only a scandal and foolishness, the cross which hitherto they have scorned and despised, the cross against which they have striven and struggled by every means in their power, which they would fain have banished from the face of the earth, now shines forth in the heavens as the sign of their Judge. What a terrible sight for them, proclaiming their condemnation! Furthermore, this cross was, in the case of thousands, marked on their foreheads in baptism and in the Sacrament of Confirmation. To the standard of the cross they have sworn allegiance, repeatedly perhaps, in the course of their lives; now, alas! at the sight of this cross the consciousness of having been false to their oath will weigh upon them like a mountain. To that cross their Redeemer was nailed, on it He hung and suffered, He shed His blood and died; all

this was done for them, and they knew it; it was not from ignorance but from indifference that they heeded it not; only think, my soul, what these unfortunate creatures will feel when they behold this cross in the heavens, and after its appearance they see the King whose diadem is the cross, their Judge, coming in the clouds. It is of Him that Habacuc writes (ch. iii. 3-6): "God will come from the south, and the Holy One from Mount Pharan. His brightness shall be as the light; Death shall go before His face, and the devil shall go forth before His feet. He stood and measured the earth; He beheld and melted the nations; and the ancient mountains were crushed to pieces. The hills of the world were bowed down by the journeys of His eternity." If only they could once come back to the world, how gladly would they carry that cross!

**3d.** Consider the joy of the just at the sight of the cross. Up to this time they also have stood trembling in the valley of Josaphat, for who has not cause to dread the coming of the Judge, if St. Paul himself was not without fear? But as soon as the cross shines forth in the heavens, their apprehension will vanish as swiftly as mist before the rising sun. For this cross is the sign of their redemption, this cross has been the daily companion of their life; they have for twenty, thirty, nay for fifty or eighty years carried this cross after their Saviour, and as disciples of this cross they have borne so much contempt and derision, they have encountered so much hatred and persecution, that now they can recall to mind the recompense our Lord promised them for all they have endured. Consequently the sight of the sign of the Son of man gleaming brightly in the heavens is as consoling to them as it is terrible to the ungodly; and in their case the beautiful words of the Imitation will be fulfilled, words the truth of which you will perhaps now appreciate more fully than heretofore: "This sign of the cross will be in Heaven when the Lord shall come to judgment. Then all the servants of the cross who in their lifetime have made themselves like to the Crucified, will draw near with great confidence to Christ the

Judge;" they will draw near to Him with the glad assurance that "in the cross is salvation; in the cross is life; in the cross is salvation from enemies; that there is no health of the soul nor hope of eternal life but in the cross." (Imit. B. ii. ch. 12.) Will you now, my soul, persist in turning a deaf ear to the invitation of your future Judge: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." (St. Matt. xvi. 24.)

## WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT.

### ON THE FINAL JUDGMENT AND THE SEPARATION OF THE EVIL AND THE GOOD.

To-day direct your attention to that scene in the judgment which our Lord depicts in the following words: "When the Son of man shall come in His majesty and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the seat of His majesty; and all nations shall be gathered together before Him." (St. Matt. xxv. 31, 32.) Join these nations in spirit, and now in your meditation imagine that the hour has already come for you to be judged, and see that you profit by this consideration.

**1st.** What opposite feelings will overwhelm those who are assembled to be judged in that moment of which the apostle John speaks in the Apocalypse (ch. xx. 11, 12): "And I saw a great white throne and One sitting upon it from whose face the earth and Heaven fled away, and there was no place found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works." How all the wicked will trem-

ble at the sight of those books, for all their works are recorded in them, and how on the contrary all the good will rejoice, for all that they have done in secret for God will then be revealed. But the sight of the Judge will kindle the minds of the multitude yet more than the sight of the books, and how different will their emotions be! While the just will with indescribable delight gaze for the first time upon the countenance of their Saviour, beholding in Him the object of all their aspirations, of their labors, of their struggles upon earth, the reprobates would gladly go down straight into hell, if thereby they could avoid meeting the terrible eye of their Judge and their Redeemer. How sad this sounds: their Redeemer! Alas! Jesus, the joy of angels, Jesus, the consolation of the elect, Jesus, "the Goodness and Bignity of God," now looks at the reprobates with a sinister glance, filling them with alarm in anticipation of the storm that will burst upon them. Woe betide you if on that last day you behold His gracious countenance flaming with wrath and indignation, for then there is no more hope for you. And if whilst-meditating upon this subject you seem to see before you not His gracious but His angry countenance, hasten to reconcile yourself to God this very day by sincere penance and you will thus escape "the wrath to come."

2d. Consider that all the angels and saints will come from Heaven to be present at this judgment, and all the devils and the damned in hell will be forced to appear there also. Then the great separation will begin, concerning which our Lord says: "All nations shall be gathered together before Him, and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats, and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on His left." (v. 32, 33.) Ponder well this momentous separation, O Christian! What will be the anguish, the shame of the Christian who has held the true faith, who has had access to the means of grace provided by the Church, and now all at once finds himself placed on the Lord's left hand, relegated to the company of Jews

and unbelievers, of demons and lost souls! What despair will seize upon you, O unhappy Priest, O miserable Religious! In your lifetime you wore the sacerdotal garb: your fellow men, your penitents, those who listened to your eloquent sermons believed in your sanctity, and now where do they see you? Among the goats! What terrible shame and disgrace! Yes, that will be a truly appalling separation when all the world will see children separated from their parents, husbands from their wives, sisters from their brothers, the king from his subjects, the master from his servant, the monk from his brethren in the cloister, separated too, not for time but for all eternity. During their lifetime they dwelt under the same roof, they sat at the same table, they knelt at the same altar; now one is on the right hand, the other on the left, and alas! never, never more will they be reunited.

**3d.** Consider the nature of the judgment. There will be no longer scrutiny, for everything is already known to the Eternal Judge, and not to Him alone but to all the world, for the life of each individual lies open before every man like the pages of an opened book. Weigh this well, O Christian. Imagine yourself to be standing in a spacious church filled by thousands of people. Suppose that the preacher suddenly in the midst of his discourse, were by divine inspiration to say: "Look at that woman yonder, who appears so modest and retiring, she is an adulteress; look at that man standing in such a devout attitude with clasped hands, he has a grievous sin on his conscience; see that youth, he is even now plotting how he can commit a disgraceful crime." And were the preacher to continue thus disclosing to every one his secret sins in such a manner that no man could gainsay his assertions, can you conceive the terror that would fill every heart, the hot blush of shame that would color every cheek, each one dreading lest his turn should come next, till at length the audience, transported with anger, would rush upon the preacher, determined to stop his mouth by fair means or foul? Now consider, no power will avail to silence the accuser who at the last day will disclose all our sins, re-

vealing not to a congregation only but to all Heaven and earth every thought, every word, every deed of our past life. And according to that revelation sentence will be given, a sentence brief as the preceding investigation and equally momentous. It will simply be: Eternal life or eternal death. What feelings does the thought of this awaken within you, my soul? But what are feelings? Rather ask yourself: What must I do in order not finally to be put to confusion before all the world? Let those above all ask themselves this question, who are ashamed to confess their misdeeds in the tribunal of penance.

## THURSDAY AFTER THE SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT.

### ON ETERNAL LIFE AND ETERNAL DEATH.

To-day, my soul, hasten forward on the wings of thought to the consummation of ages, to that moment when time will be at an end, when all that appertains to earth will cease to exist, when there will be nothing before us but eternity. This new order of things commences at the close of the final judgment. Represent to yourself the scene when the Eternal Judge rises up from the judgment-seat with all the angels and the elect, to ascend into the kingdom of His Father, whilst the devils and all the lost souls in their train are precipitated for ever into the pool burning with fire and brimstone.

**1st.** Consider the glorious entry of the elect into the kingdom of Heaven. Imagine yourself to be passing with them through the golden portals of those celestial halls; what a beauteous, what a brilliant procession you are joining! Christ Himself, in the dazzling brightness of His unspeakable majesty enters into the heavenly Jerusalem; He returns to that eternal city attended by countless hosts of angels, accompanied by His blessed Mother, followed

by the admirable company of the patriarchs and prophets, by radiant bands of martyrs in lustrous array, by white-robed virgins bearing lilies in their hands, surrounded by the glorious apostles and an innumerable multitude of saints and chosen souls. How the courts of heaven will ring with the songs of praise raised by these triumphal hosts as they enter in! "I heard," St. John says, "as it were the voice of a great multitude and as the voice of great thunders, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord our God Almighty hath reigned. Let us be glad and rejoice and give glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come." (Ap. xix. 6, 7.) Yes, it is to the nuptials of the Lamb, to the eternal bridal feast in the glorious city of God that they are entering in, the city of which St. John says that it shines like to the jasper stone and to crystal, that its gates are pearls, its streets pure gold like unto transparent glass, and the glory of God is the light thereof. How the redeemed will rejoice at this unspeakable blissful sight! The mere entry into the heavenly Jerusalem will of itself richly compensate to them for the way of the cross which they trod on earth.

**2d.** Consider the awful downfall of the damned into hell. What an utterly different scene we now look upon! The bright day is transformed into dark night, the glad songs of joy are exchanged for savage howls, the despair of the lost is substituted for the bliss of the redeemed whom we have just seen entering into the possession of their reward. No sooner has the Eternal Judge uttered His terrible mandate: "Depart from Me," than the mouth of hell opens and the lost souls look down into it, look down with horror into the yawning abyss of darkness, into "the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone," into the "land of misery and darkness where the shadow of death and no order but everlasting horror dwelleth." (Job x. 22.) Into this furnace, where is "howling and gnashing of teeth," into this dungeon where "their worm shall not die and their fire shall not be quenched" (Is. lxvi. 24), into this kingdom of darkness and of death where the lost shall be "tormented with fire and brimstone and the smoke of

their torments shall ascend up for ever and ever, neither have they rest day nor night" (Ap. xiv. 11) the damned are now compelled to enter. Well may they turn with shuddering from such a place, well may they struggle and strive not to enter into this awful region: their horror, their resistance are alike futile. As our Lord once saw Satan as lightning fall from Heaven, so these unfortunate creatures, after the divine sentence has been pronounced upon them, are hurled without hope of present rescue or future release into the frightful abyss which closes upon them for ever. My soul, remember that it is yet within your power to save yourself from that terrible fall. But perhaps to-day is your last chance, to-morrow your efforts may be too late.

3d. Consider, as far as it is possible for us mortals to form any conception of it, the state of things that will then prevail. Endeavor to realize what it will be when time is no more, when the seasons cease their changes. Day no longer follows night, summer no longer succeeds to winter. Man's condition is no longer that of a pilgrim upon earth, life's journey is at an end, he will no more experience the vicissitudes of prosperity and adversity. There are now only two states immutably fixed and eternally unchangeable; everlasting day in Heaven and everlasting night in hell; everlasting happiness or everlasting torment. Eternal light for the redeemed, eternal darkness for the lost. The blessed on high, united to God, chant unending hosannas, whilst the damned below, whom God has banished from His presence, utter piteous howls and gnash their teeth. In short on the one hand is eternal life, on the other eternal death. Think for a moment of all that is fair and pleasing and consoling connected with our idea of life, and then think of the horror and dread, of the corruption and decay, the grief and misery which the word death suggests to the mind; you will then more fully appreciate the meaning of everlasting life and everlasting death. Centuries will pass, tens of thousands of years, nay eons of ages will elapse, and when they have gone by, eternal life and eternal death will only have be-



gun their course. Is it possible that after meditating upon truths so solemn and serious you can yet, during this short span of time, heedlessly stake your whole eternity? Do you not hear this warning voice speaking to your heart, crying to you: "I call Heaven and earth to witness this day that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Choose therefore life." (Deut. xxx. 19.)

## FRIDAY AFTER THE SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT.

### ON OUR LORD IN HIS CHARACTER OF OUR ETERNAL MEDIATOR.

Deeply affected as you cannot fail to be by the terrors of the judgment to come which you have been contemplating, you will doubtless find fear and trembling seize upon your soul, and you will anxiously inquire with our Lord's disciples: "Who then can be saved?" (St. Matt. xix. 25.) And well it will be for you if you fear and tremble now, since your present apprehension may be the means of preserving you from eternal despair; yet lest you should think of your salvation with overmuch fear, overmuch alarm, turn your attention to-day to a more pleasing subject of thought. Contemplate once again your Saviour, whom in your meditations you have followed in spirit from His incarnation until the consummation of the world, in the office which He exercised upon earth and still continues to exercise at the right hand of God in Heaven; the office of our Mediator and Advocate. Your God did not deem it sufficient to redeem you with His blood, to impart to you His saving doctrine; He prayed and interceded for you on earth, and He now prays and intercedes for you in Heaven.

1st. Consider that during the period of His earthly existence our Lord constituted Himself our Mediator. For the space of thirty years the walls of His foster-father's quiet house at Nazareth, the solitudes of His hidden life

heard His supplications ascending to Heaven on our behalf; His earnest petitions for us went up from the glades of Mount Olivet on many a tranquil night, until that last night came, the last before His death, when, standing in the gloomy valley of Cedron in that final prayer offered for the last time in His capacity of High Priest, He epitomized the whole purport of His ministry, the object and aim of His life and teaching here below. He then prayed for the welfare of the Church militant in time, and for her perfection and glorification as the Church triumphant to all eternity. Study this prayer to-day, the prayer of Jesus, our High Priest; listen to your Redeemer interceding on your behalf, and on behalf of all who should believe in Him: "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given Me, because they are Thine. And all Mine are Thine and Thine are Mine and I am glorified in them. And now I am not in the world and these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as we also are." (St. John xvii. 9-11.) Can you listen unmoved, my soul, when you hear your God beseeching His heavenly Father on your behalf? Can you remain cold and indifferent while He besieges Heaven with this entreaty: "Father, I will that where I am they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me, that they may see My glory which Thou hast given Me, because Thou hast loved Me before the creation of the world." (v. 24.) Wherefore take heart, my soul; see, before you were in existence our Lord prayed for you and for you He still unceasingly prays.

**2d.** Consider further that our Lord has not ceased to be our intercessor upon earth. St. Paul tells us this, when in his epistle to the Hebrews he writes: "Christ hath an everlasting priesthood whereby He is also able to save for ever them that come to God by Him; always living to make intercession for us." (Heb. vii. 24, 25.) Again: "You are come to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the sprinkling of blood which speaketh better than that of Abel." (ch. xii. 24.) Yes, my soul, as once

the blood of Abel, shed upon the fields Cain cultivated, cried to Heaven, so now upon our altars the blood of the second Abel cries daily to Heaven imploring for us, entreating pardon for us. Jesus ever lives in our midst, and in the solitude of the tabernacle He prays for us unceasingly. Do not pass carelessly over this touching truth. Reflect how, just as in the days when our Lord, a child, a youth unknown and unnoticed at Nazareth, pleaded on behalf of mankind, so now, while the world knowing nothing and heeding nothing, constantly provokes the anger of God by its sins and iniquities, from the silent, lonely tabernacle there ascends to Heaven day and night, the supplicating voice of our eternal Mediator interceding for us. What a consoling thought this is for you, my soul; does it not stimulate you to come more often to Jesus in the tabernacle, and in His presence to unite your intercession to His Father for yourself and for your Brethren more fervently than heretofore?

**3d.** Consider finally that Christ is our Mediator at the right hand of God in Heaven. A wondrous vision was once vouchsafed to John, the prophet of the New Covenant; he thus describes what he beheld: "I saw: and behold in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the ancients, a Lamb standing as it were slain." (Ap. v. 6.) Thus the Apostle beheld in the sanctuary of Heaven the Lamb "as it were slain," that is to say, although He is in His glory far removed from death and the pains of death, the Lamb of God yet bears and will for ever bear the marks of His sacred wounds as a trophy of victory and a pledge of reconciliation and mercy for us. Our Lord standing before His heavenly Father bears the stigmata on His glorified body, the five wounds of the divine Lamb that was slain, wounds glorified equally with the rest of His body, and clearly visible upon that body when He rose from the dead. Praying and interceding continually for us miserable sinners, He holds out His hands, marked with those sacred signs, to His heavenly Father whom we have so grievously offended, displaying them to Him

as tokens of the atonement that was made upon the cross. Seeing that we have this great Mediator in the highest courts of Heaven, St. John exclaims with rapture: "My little children, these things I write to you that you may not sin. But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just, and He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for those of the whole world." (I. St. John ii. 1, 2.) How consoling, how elevating is this truth!

Listen, my soul; stained as you are with sin you cannot look up otherwise than with fear and dread to the Heaven against which you have transgressed; but rejoice, for you have in that same Heaven an advocate, Jesus your Lord. Now if not merely all the company of saints and the Queen of all Saints herself plead our cause, but God Himself, the Lord of those saints, constitutes Himself our Mediator and Advocate, intercedes for us with His Father and our Father, who need despair of salvation? Nay more, what excuse is there for one who in spite of such assistance fails to work out his salvation?

## SATURDAY AFTER THE SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT.

### CONCLUDING MEDITATION.

The traveller who has been passing through a region of remarkably grand and beautiful scenery, before leaving that part of the country, naturally pauses on the summit of the last acclivity, and looks back in order to gaze once more on the magnificent panorama before him, and impress it on his memory. In the same way it will be well for you to-day to cast a retrospective glance over the marvellously grand and beautiful life of our Lord, which during the past year you have been contemplating, and thus let the principal features of the pleas-

ing prospect, elevating alike to heart and mind, be stamped in brief outline on your soul.

**1st.** Consider the wondrous beauty and mysterious depth of the life of our Lord which has hitherto formed the subject of your meditations. In thought pass in review once more the different scenes of the life of Christ amongst the children of men, abounding as it did in graces and blessings for mankind. Remember how the sight of the divine Infant in the crib rejoiced your heart; how the ineffable charm of the Child Jesus won your affections, how the wondrous wisdom of the divine Teacher roused your admiration, how the miraculous power of the great Thaumaturgus excited your amazement. Remember the singular and irresistible attraction which the Good Shepherd had for your poor, sinful heart; how that heart throbbed with awe and reverence when you beheld the High Priest celebrating the Last Supper, how it was torn with grief and anguish when you followed your tortured Lord from Olivet to Calvary, and how it swelled with joy and exultation at the sight of the risen Saviour, on witnessing His ascension into Heaven. Yes, that life was truly an inexhaustible mine of rich ore on which you have dwelt in your meditations; it was a treasure-house of the most sublime and salutary truths that your attentive consideration unlocked to you; an unfathomable fount of profound consolation and instruction from which you daily drew; in a word, it was an earthly vision of the Deity, a revelation of His works of mercy and of love. Therefore look back with deep thankfulness on the spiritual journey, replete with blessings, which you made in your hours of recollection and reflection during the past year.

**2d.** Consider the fruit of these meditations. No one traverses an especially beautiful region without receiving and bearing away with him some particular impression; no one remains seated for a considerable time beside a clear, cool spring without quenching his thirst in its waters, and no one walks for weeks in a well-cultivated garden without plucking a flower or gathering a fruit.

Now apply this to yourself. For a whole year you have accompanied our Lord on His wanderings in this world, for a whole year you have been seated beside the Fount of life, you have lingered in the new garden of paradise, full of fruit for eternal life—and of what use has all this been to you? A single word spoken by our Lord which Antony the hermit once heard, awoke in him the resolution to enter upon his strange supernatural existence. This one exhortation which Christ addressed to His disciples: “Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses; nor scrip for your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff” (St. Matt. x. 9, 10), was the means of inspiring St. Francis to found his great Order. And you have for the space of a year been contemplating the whole life of Christ, studying the teaching of Christ; what great resolution has this called into being within your soul, what great act has our Lord’s word and example inspired you to perform? Meditation on Christ’s life and Passion was ever the source whence the saints drew their fortitude, their solace, their strength, their wisdom; in it men such as St. Augustine and St. Chrysostom, St. Bernard and St. Bonaventure found an inexhaustible supply of counsel and knowledge—yet alas! to you, after a whole year of meditation, it is perhaps still a closed book, with its seven seals unbroken; it is a treasure still hidden from your sight. Or have you really become a better Christian, more pious, more devout, more united to God? have you increased in likeness to and conformity with Him whose life on earth you have contemplated day by day?

**3d.** Consider finally the reasons why so little fruit is produced. The scantiness of the produce yielded by some land may be accounted for on different grounds. The reason may rest with God, who does not give the increase, or with man, to whose unskilfulness or slothfulness the sterility of the fields is due. If God has not granted the increase in your case, ask yourself whence this is? Were you perhaps unfaithful to His grace? Or have you

neglected to ask for this grace, to implore this blessing from on high? Or may you perchance not belong to the number of the humble souls to whom alone God grants His grace? Examine yourself on these points, for in all probability you are responsible for the result, not God. Perhaps your own indolence was the cause why you have gained so little fruit; he who would find treasure must bestir himself, he must, like the merchant in the Gospel, purchase it at a great cost. Have you acted as the merchant did? Of what nature was the preparation you made, and did you persevere in your meditation in spite of difficulties? Or did you aim wide of the mark, and not seek in meditation what ought to be sought in it? "Truth is to be sought for in Holy Scripture, not eloquence; all Holy Scripture ought to be read with that spirit with which it was made." (Imit. B. i. ch. 5.) Or perhaps you did not meditate in a right spirit? "The teaching of Christ surpasses all the teachings of the saints; and whosoever had the spirit would find therein the hidden manna. But it happens that many by the frequent hearing of the Gospel, feel little care for it because they have not the spirit of Christ. He however who would understand in their full savor the words of Christ, must study to make his whole life conformable to Him." (Imit. B. i. ch. 1.) Weigh well these precious words: you will perhaps find in them the solution of the problem; and then form the resolution for the ecclesiastical year on which we are about to enter, in all your meditations to follow the counsel of the Ven. Father Rodriguez: "In meditating upon the life and Passion of Jesus Christ, let the following of Christ be your chief aim and object, and the principal fruit to be derived from your meditation. Let each one accordingly endeavor to imitate the virtue of which he stands most in need; let him dwell upon this, study it deeply, and understand it thoroughly, and also carry it into practice, until it has struck root profoundly in his heart, and the corresponding vice has become totally extinct."

Now the whole life of Christ lies outspread before you—choose some one virtue as the model for your imitation, and it cannot then be said that the time spent upon meditation has been fruitless.



## APPENDIX.

### THE FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF OUR LADY.

(December 8.)

#### ON THE BEAUTY OF THE DOGMA THAT DECLARES MARY TO HAVE BEEN CONCEIVED WITHOUT SIN.

Represent to yourself the newly created world on that first Sabbath morning, when God rested from His work, and with satisfaction saw "all things that He had made that they were very good." How fair, how glorious must have been the aspect of creation as yet unstained, undesecrated, the virgin soil as yet under no curse; with what delight must the eye of the first man have rested on the clear azure of the firmament, the pleasing verdure of earth, the brilliant hues of the flowers, among which no poisonous growth proclaimed it cursed by God. When you have placed this scene vividly before your mind reflect that all which you admire so much is but a faint image of the beauty and glory of the ever-immaculate Virgin Mary. And this article of belief, fiercely contested and widely ridiculed, that the Blessed Virgin from the first moment of her conception was preserved and kept free from every stain of original sin by a special gift and grace of Almighty God, through the foreseen merits of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the human race, is not only essentially beautiful, it also satisfies the understanding and delights the heart of man.

1st. Consider that our reason tells us that God had power to work this miracle on Mary's behalf, and that it was meet and right that He should accomplish it. If

God was able to cause Gedeon's fleece to remain perfectly dry whilst all around the ground was drenched with dew, He was able to preserve Mary alone without spot or stain of sin, amidst all His sin-stained creatures. "If," says St. Anselm, "it has pleased God to give to the chestnut the peculiarity of being enclosed in a prickly envelope during the time of its growth and development, and thus secured from the possibility of injury, could He not cause the human temple which He was preparing for Himself, for His own abode, although conceived amongst the thorns of sinful humanity, to be completely preserved from contact with those thorns? Assuredly He both could and did do this." And why was it His will to do this, if not because it was most fitting that Mary should be conceived without sin, for only think what was her high destiny, in what relation she stood to Christ, and what was her position in regard to the devil, and your own reason will show you the justice of this dogma. Consider how repugnant it would be to your feelings to think that a vessel which had been put to a profane use, which had been grievously defiled, even though it had been subsequently cleansed, should be employed to contain the sacred and precious blood of our Lord; or that an altar on which for years abominable sacrifices had been offered to idols, should all at once be used for the celebration of the holy mysteries of Christian worship. Could you imagine it possible that Mary, the chalice of the divinity, the altar of the incarnate God, should have been previously defiled by the stain of sin, that she should, even for the shortest time imaginable have been subject to the power of the devil? "What man," exclaims St. Cyril, "what man of sound reason would be found to believe that the Son of God having built for Himself a living temple, chosen for Himself a human throne where He was Himself to dwell in person, would have tolerated being compelled to surrender the first claim to that dwelling-place, to yield the first use of it to the evil one, to His deadly enemy? Could any reasonable being entertain such an idea for a single instant?"

2d. Consider that this article of belief delights and satisfies our heart. It fills the heart pre-eminently with unspeakable joy. Can it fail to give you real pleasure to see your Mother, your Helper, your Mediatrix, in a word your greatest benefactress thus honored? If you know John the Baptist to have been sanctified in his mother's womb, would it not grieve you to think that she who is greater than John, who was more than the precursor, who was the Mother of Christ, should have even for one brief moment borne the stain of sin in her mother's womb? Is it not also a source of unspeakable joy to know that one member at least of the human race was never subject to the power of Satan, your bitterest enemy, your most hateful foe? And finally, does not the sight of so fair a creation of divine omnipotence fill your heart with gladness? Does not the sight of so splendid, so miraculous a work of divine grace fill your soul with rapture? Well may the Church exclaim in the words of the versicle: Thy immaculate conception, O Virgin, brought joy to the whole world. Yet the immaculate conception of our blessed Lady is not only a source of rejoicing for the Christian, it is also a source of inspiration and of strength; it inspires us with love for holy chastity, which shines forth so resplendently in the person of the immaculate Virgin, and it strengthens us to sustain the conflict in defense of that virtue when we are assailed by the temptations of that serpent whose head the immaculate Virgin crushes. Let this admonition for holy chastity be the fruit of to-day's meditation. If you are a Priest, remember that you stand in the same relationship to the Incarnate God as Mary did; if you are a Religious, and therefore like her a Spouse of Christ, take heed that you are indeed a chaste bride of Heaven, and in seasons of conflict and temptation have immediate recourse to the succor and protection of the ever-immaculate Virgin.

**THE FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS OF SALES.**

(January 29.)

**ON THE AMIABILITY OF THE SAINT.**

Picture to yourself your Saviour in as life-like colors as possible, at the time when He went about upon earth in His indescribable sweetness and loving kindness. Happy the mortals who were privileged to behold Him, Jesus the all-bountiful, whose kindness attracted the children to Him, whose gentleness encouraged sinners to draw nigh to Him, and whose charity led Him to call to all men: Come unto Me and I will refresh you. Our Lord no longer dwells on earth in His sacred humanity, yet in a certain sense He is still present here below in the person of His saints. There is one saint above all others in whom our Lord's amiability is marvellously reflected, St. Francis of Sales. Consider what it was that made our Lord's character so extremely lovable.

**1st.** His unassumingness and self-abnegation. Because the divine Redeemer did not love Himself or study Himself, He was loved and sought after by all the good. For whilst self-seeking and inordinate self-love only repel, unselfish modesty is most attractive. This is why one feels such an attraction to the crib of Bethlehem, where the Redeemer of the world reposes, a helpless infant, having "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant." (Phil. ii. 7.) This is why your heart glows with love to Jesus, who forgetful of Himself, sacrificing Himself, only seeks this one thing, to accomplish the will of His heavenly Father. This is why every Christian clings with fond attachment to the divine Saviour who, utterly regardless of self, suffered hunger and thirst, endured hardships and labor, and shed His blood for the salvation of man. How admirably this sweet, unassuming amiability and self-abnegation on our Lord's part are reproduced in St. Francis of Sales. The wealthy son of a noble family, he

abandoned the easy, luxurious life in his father's castle where he was respected and obeyed, in order in self-forgetfulness and self-denial to lead a life of poverty, of renunciation, of perpetual sacrifice. Like our Lord he also, seeking nothing, desiring nothing for himself, journeyed about in summer heat and wintry cold, in snow-storm and tempest, taking shelter for the night in some poor hovel or empty shed, or resting under the open vault of Heaven. He was reviled and calumniated and persecuted, an attempt was even made to poison him, yet Francis remained ever the same, ever serene, ever cheerful; and if any one had actually put out one of his eyes, he would, as he himself declared, have looked at his tormentor with the other in charity and forgiveness. So completely had he renounced all personal feelings, so thoroughly had he mortified self-love and self-interest that he became a saint distinguished for his extraordinary charity and meekness. Gaze long and earnestly, my soul, on this most pleasing figure; look at your own image reflected in this mirror, and then consider another reason why our Lord was so extraordinarily lovable.

**2d.** It was on account of His clemency and loving kindness. He it is of whom the Apostle says that in Him the goodness and kindness of God appeared on earth (Tit. iii. 4); He it is of whom Holy Scripture records that He went about doing good. Imagine that you see the multitudes of blind and lame, of deaf, of lepers whom in His mercy He healed, the sinners whom in His love for man He graciously rescued; consider how He completely made Himself all things to all men, and you will be able to form some conception of His infinite loving kindness. Now this amiability and charity of our Lord is reflected with special brilliance in one particular saint, and that one is St. Francis of Sales. He, too, literally made himself all things to all men; he too went about doing good; he, too, journeyed about, amid indescribable toils and privations from village to village, from cabin to cabin, an impersonification of goodness and kindness; in one place instructing the ignorant, in another ministering to the

sick, in a third converting sinners. Animated by divine charity, he descended to the bottom of the valleys and climbed the mountain heights, traversed gloomy forests and crossed raging torrents, never resting until, by his own unaided efforts, he had effected the conversion of 72,000 heretics, effected it for the most part by means of the goodness and kindness that made him so universally beloved. Oh ask yourself whether you resemble this great follower of Christ? Do your fellow Religious, do those with whom you hold intercourse, do the members of your flock, those who are subject to your authority, see in you the mirrored image of your gracious Redeemer, so lovable on account of His goodness and loving kindness? Or are you perhaps the very opposite of your most amiable Lord, by your selfishness, your tendency to put forward your own personality, your uncivil, almost repellent manner towards those around you? Examine yourself on this point, and according to the result of your scrutiny take special resolutions; and with pious determination exclaim in St. Francis of Sales' own words: "I no longer belong to myself; whether I live or die, I am the Lord's. I have now no more individuality, I no more can call anything my own. My being is merged in that of Christ my Lord, and my riches consist in belonging to Him."

## THE FEAST OF THE PURIFICATION.

(February 2.)

### ON THE LIGHT OF SANCTIFYING GRACE.

Contemplate the ceremonies of to-day's festival, paying particular heed to the blessing of candles and the procession that follows. There is a peculiar mystery about light. When the triune God first drew aside the veil of obscurity that shrouded His mysterious, eternal existence, the first creative word He uttered was this: "Be light made."

And when the Second Person of the Holy Trinity revealed Himself to man in the incarnation, the plains of Bethlehem, wrapped in the darkness of night, were suddenly illumined by a brilliant light from Heaven. Again, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, God the Holy Ghost, appeared in the shining light of tongues of fire. Jesus Christ is called Light, the Light of the world, and the tapers which are solemnly blessed by the priest to-day are emblematic of Him. My soul, amongst all the tapers that are blessed to-day consider two pre-eminently: the taper that is held at baptism and that which is lighted in the hour of death.

**1st.** Consider first what the baptismal taper suggests to the Christian. This taper, which was lighted when you were made a child of God in the laver of regeneration, consists of virgin wax, the wax of bees, and is white in color and pure in substance. This fact will afford you abundant matter for meditation. The candle is white and undefiled, like the baptismal robe, of which the Priest when giving it to you says: "Receive this white garment and see that thou carry it without stain before the judgment-seat of our Lord Jesus Christ." In order to do this you must also obey the admonition which the Priest adds when he gives the lighted candle to the person baptized (or his god-parents): "Receive this burning light and keep thy baptism blameless," that is to say, let your life be pure and blameless, pass your days in that virginal purity whereof this white taper is an emblem. The words of the Priest: "Receive this burning light," also suggest food for thought. The taper was kindled at the lamp which burns constantly before the tabernacle; it is to be burnt in the service of God, and in burning it is consumed. In like manner, O Christian, the light of faith, the flame of grace was kindled in your soul in holy baptism; it was kindled by Christ, the eternal Light, and thus consecrated as a spiritual taper in the temple of God you ought throughout your whole life to burn in the service of God and be completely consumed whilst burning with divine charity, as the flame consumes the taper; that is to say, all thought of self, all love of

self must be banished from your heart. Meditate deeply on the beautiful symbolism of the baptismal candle. Ask yourself the serious question whether you stand in the temple of God as Mary did when she brought her oblation, a pure votive candle burning with a steady flame, or does the unruly fire of passion burn within your heart, a fire which with its fumes has already extinguished the soft light of grace kindled in holy baptism.

2d. Consider what the taper lighted at the Christian's death-bed teaches us. Imagine that your last hour has come; realize as far as you can what your feelings will be in that terribly solemn moment when the thrill of horror which is the precursor of dissolution passes over your wasted frame. What are the thoughts which will crowd in upon your mind at the sight of the taper by your side? Your dying gaze will rest upon the feeble flame of that taper, you will remember that in the commencement of your life, at your baptism, a candle was burnt, the baptismal candle, and you will be reminded that then the light of faith, the light of sanctifying grace was kindled in your soul. Have you kept that flame alive, have you always walked by its light? Has Christ truly been the light of your life, and is He now likewise the light of your dying hour? While these thoughts pass through your soul, soon to wing her flight from earth, the voice of the Priest is heard reciting the prayer: "Go forth, O Christian soul, from this world, in the name of God, the Father Almighty, who created thee;" and perhaps as the words are spoken you will be forced to acknowledge, He did indeed create me, He is my Father, but I have not acted as His child. "Go forth," the Priest continues, "in the name of the Son of the living God, who suffered for thee;" and you say to yourself, suffered, but suffered in vain for me, since alas! I have trodden under foot His precious blood. "Go forth, in the name of the Holy Ghost who consecrated thee for a holy temple," so the Priest proceeds, and you meanwhile think in your heart, I have desecrated that temple shamefully by my sins. And if the transgressions of the past, those dark deeds committed by the light of the nocturnal



lamp, rise up to memory and assume threatening proportions in the glimmer of the taper beside your bed, then that burning taper, instead of reminding you to your solace of Jesus who is your light, will rather recall the thought of the flames of hell, with their awful, ceaseless burning. If this be so, it will make it impossible for you to repeat with holy Simeon the words of the Gospel for this day: "Now dost Thou dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word in peace, because my eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples; a light to the revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel." (St. Luke ii. 29 seq.) Take heed therefore, my soul, to follow the precept which the baptismal candle is intended to teach us, and the taper lighted beside your death-bed will console you, and light you on your journey through the dark valley of death. Imitate during your life the bright example of virtue Mary gives you, brighter far than the light of all the tapers lighted on this day, and then in the hour of death you will rejoice in her protection, and the taper lighted at the hour of your departure will be no less pleasant a sight than that which was burnt at your baptism.

## THE FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH.

(March 19.)

### ON THE HAPPINESS ST. JOSEPH ENJOYED.

Picture St. Joseph to yourself amid the celestial glory and magnificence which is his portion in Heaven, as the foster-father of Jesus Christ. Imagine that you see him receiving on this day, the congratulations of the denizens of the celestial courts, while thousands upon thousands of ascriptions of praise and hymns in his honor ascend from earth. For is he not the illustrious protector of the Child Jesus, the powerful patron of the Church, the helper

and consoler of the dying? When you have in some measure realized how great is the glory and the bliss of the foster-father of Christ, consider that even whilst on earth he enjoyed somewhat of that felicity, that joy.

**1st.** Consider the happiness St. Joseph found in intercourse with Mary and Jesus. Think what a plenitude of grace, what transcendent blessedness are expressed in those two sentences: "The husband of Mary, the foster-father of Jesus." Who can fail to experience a thrill of delight in merely uttering the name, the sweet name of Mary? This name is a sweet solace to the afflicted, a star of salvation to the shipwrecked, an effectual remedy for the sick, a marvellous aid to the dying; at the very sound of this name St. Bernard was transported with delight, St. Francis was filled with ecstatic joy, St. Joseph of Cupertino fell into a rapture. Now Joseph, the fortunate spouse of that blessed Virgin, lived in daily, blissful intercourse with that heavenly being, on whose countenance the angels desired to gaze. What great, what incomparable happiness! But this was not all; Joseph was also privileged to hold constant intercourse with Jesus. Only think, my soul, of this unspeakable happiness; think what Jesus was, the fairest, the most attractive of children, the divine and holy Child. If the sight of an ordinary child in the age of innocence is pleasing, if the possession of an ordinarily good child affords great happiness to his father and mother, who can adequately describe the celestial joy which Joseph felt when in his hours of leisure he took the divine Child in his arms, and with Him and with the angels who watched around unseen—or perhaps not always unseen—held delightful converse concerning God the Father, concerning the joys of Heaven, concerning the mysteries of the Redemption, upon all of which subjects the Child Jesus, as He advanced in wisdom as in age, gave him the most wondrous lights. Who can express in words the happiness Joseph felt, when he spent the tranquil evening hours in sacred colloquy with Jesus and His Virgin Mother, or strolled through the meadows of Nazareth in quiet converse with one or with the other. Such joy you too ought

to feel and experience, my soul, and you will feel it in a greater degree—mark this well—the nearer you approach to Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

**2d.** Consider when and to what extent Joseph enjoyed this happiness. There is no saint about whom so little is known as St. Joseph. Not a single word which he uttered has ever been recorded. We meet with him suddenly in the pages of Holy Scripture, a poor carpenter, a chaste and just man who always fulfils with implicit obedience the commands God lays on him; then the curtain drops, he disappears from the stage of this world, how or when no one knows. Yet this humble artisan, living in the greatest retirement and obscurity, living in poverty, in chastity, and simply obeying the orders given him, enjoyed the greatest privilege that can fall to the lot of mortal man: the most intimate, the closest intercourse with Jesus and Mary. How much matter for meditation this affords you, my soul. Perhaps in contemplating Joseph's signal happiness, a feeling of holy envy, of holy longing awoke in your heart. Well, you now know the means whereby one can most easily attain such happiness, you know the way which leads to it most rapidly and most surely. Not in the turmoil of a busy life, not in the noisy world, but in seclusion and solitude, in retirement and in silence the devout soul makes progress and calls our Lord to be her guest. And the way whereby one can with the greatest facility attain to the happiness Joseph enjoyed is the path he trod, the path of poverty, chastity and obedience. Cast your eyes, my soul, on all nations in all ages, and ask who were, who are the happiest people? Who have enjoyed, who do enjoy the most blessed and blissful intercourse with Jesus and Mary? You will not have long to seek, only look upon the saints of your own Order, both canonized and uncanonized, and your own eyes will convince you that those who live in poverty, chastity and obedience are happy as Joseph was, and the more they practise his virtues the happier they are. If therefore you desire to

possess the same felicity as Joseph did, practise the virtues by which he was distinguished; make it your resolution for to-day to do this in future.

## THE FEAST OF ST. BENEDICT.

(March 21.)

### ON THE CONFLICT ST. BENEDICT SUSTAINED.

Think of the illustrious Founder of the great Benedictine Order; think of him when he appeared at his greatest in the moment of his death. It was not lying prostrate upon his bed that Benedict gave up his soul to God, but standing upright in the church before the Blessed Sacrament. He died, so to speak, as an athlete in the arena, as a champion of Jesus Christ, erect and unconquered, yet in his death showing himself to be a mortified monk, who needed not, like those who live in the world, a soft couch whereon to rest in his dying moments. Yes, Benedict is an athlete, a warrior, and certainly a most victorious warrior of Jesus Christ.

1st. Consider the conflict the saint sustained with himself. Strange to say, he began his warfare with flight, but it was no cowardly, ignominious flight, such as often ends by the fugitive falling into the hands of his pursuers. It was a prudent flight, by means of which he might be enabled to give battle again to the enemy, and from a more advantageous position. Fleeing from the company of the corrupt youth of Rome, Benedict, like his divine Master, begins in the desert his contest with the evil one; he resists him with the weapons of mortification and renunciation, of prayer and fasting; and this contest was carried on daily until it culminated in the act of the saint in throwing himself into a thicket of thorns which tore his flesh, and Satan, amazed at such heroic courage, took to flight. Thus a brilliant victory was gained. Benedict had vanquished the enemy and con-

quered himself; and from thenceforward, so thoroughly had he mastered his rebel nature, that the smouldering flame of passion was completely extinguished within his breast.

Whilst contemplating this conflict which the saint sustained, my soul, remember this truth: Whoso desires to win souls for Heaven, whoso desires to work and work effectually in the kingdom of God, must before all and above all conquer himself before he can conquer others and bring them under subjection to the cross. I never enjoined on others anything which I had not previously done myself, a saint once said on his death-bed. See that you follow his example. Instead of forming grand projects in connection with others, wage war as St. Benedict did, primarily with yourself. Strive to gain this victory; be assured that there is none greater, for as St. Gregory says, to rule oneself, to master oneself and one's unruly passions is a much grander achievement than to rule others. And the Wise Man says: "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh cities." (Prov. xvi. 32.)

**2d.** Consider the conflict St. Benedict sustained with the world. Not only did this great soldier of Jesus Christ subdue the evil in himself: he proceeded to attack the evil of the world. He began this warfare as did the most eminent saints, on a small scale; endeavoring to root out the evil from among the shepherds who visited him in his solitude, then from amongst the monks in Vicovaro, of which monastery he was for a short time Abbot, until he finally founded his Order at Monte Casino. There he formed a vast and powerful army of which he assumed the generalship, placing himself at its head, sending out valiant combatants to pursue the evil in all its dens and lurking-places, and to re-establish the kingdom of God on the ruins of Satan's kingdom. Realize for once, my soul, the magnitude of the work accomplished by Benedict and his disciples; see how in every direction physical and spiritual darkness gave way before them; how forests were cleared, marshes dried up,

and what is of far greater importance, the spiritual darkness which brooded over whole nations was put to flight and superseded by the bright light of Christian faith and Christian morals. Now let the contemplation of what these soldiers of Christ effected stimulate you also to labor, to fight, to carry on continual warfare with what is evil within your own circle, in the sphere of activity which God has marked out for you. Do this by means of prayer and mortification, by means of exhortation and correction; never grow weary, whether from the pulpit or in the confessional, of admonishing your erring brother as St. Benedict admonished the king of the Goths: "At length give up your sins." And if after this manner you show yourself to be a Benedict in the warfare of this world, you may look forward to being hereafter in Heaven a *Benedictus*, or blessed one; and you will hear our Lord say to you: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom."

## THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION.

(March 25.)

### ON THE HUMBLE ANSWER WHICH MARY GAVE TO THE ANGEL.

Visit to-day in spirit the tranquil chamber at Nazareth, and contemplate the hallowed scene it presents; Mary is on her knees before God absorbed in fervent prayer. Suddenly a celestial brightness fills the secluded room, the Archangel Gabriel stands before her and salutes her with the words: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women." (St. Luke i. 28.) Now consider the conduct of the holy Virgin, and the answer she makes to the heavenly visitant.

**1st.** The Evangelist tells us: "Who having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought within herself what

manner of salutation this should be." (v. 29.) Mary was troubled, not so much by the coming of the angel, for she, the Queen of Angels, she, the sinless, the Virgin full of grace, had no reason to fear any of the celestial spirits; no, it was her humility alone that occasioned her alarm. The lowly Virgin was troubled at hearing the high encomium passed upon her by the angel, and her humility made her silent at first, for she knew not what reply to make to his salutation. "The humble Virgin," says St. Bernard, "would rather make no response at all than speak rashly concerning a matter which she did not fully comprehend; not until the angel has delivered the whole of his message, and announced to her that she is destined to be the Mother of the Son of God, does she break silence and open her lips to inquire: 'How shall this be done, because I know not man?' (v. 34.)" Here again it is Mary's humility which asks the question. In the course of nature it cannot be done, that she knows full well who is perpetually a Virgin; is it possible that God is going to work in her a miracle as yet unheard of? And how can it be supposed that she, the lowly handmaid of the Lord, an obscure Jewish maiden, the betrothed bride of a carpenter, should be found worthy of such a distinction, worthy of an exertion of miraculous power on the part of the Eternal God? Mary does not doubt the word of the angel, she accepts as true all that he announces, although her humility will hardly permit her to believe such great things concerning herself. Let this, my soul, be the theme of your meditation. It is a characteristic of eminent saints to think little of themselves, never to consider themselves deserving of any special marks of divine favor. And if these favors are bestowed on them, if God calls them to high dignities, to fill positions of extraordinary importance, then they are troubled. They do not mistrust the word of God, they mistrust their own talents and capabilities. How shall this be done? they ask in their humility. Thus Moses acted, when the Lord sent him to Pharaoh; St. Augustine and St. Chrysostom did the same, when it was proposed to raise

them to the priesthood. How is it with you, weak, sinful mortal that you are?

**2d.** Consider that when the angel had returned a satisfactory answer to Mary's humble question, she thought of making no other reply than the beautiful, ever-memorable words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word." The desire, the will of God takes precedence of the desire, the will of her humble heart. If it is God's good pleasure to raise the lowly Virgin to such an exalted dignity, she is ready to acquiesce in His will; it rests with Him to make of her a vessel to honor or to dishonor; she is His handmaid, let it be done unto her according to His word. Do you not perceive, my soul, that in this second answer that comes from Mary's lips her humility reaches its climax; does not her answer indicate most admirably the limit that ought to be fixed—a limit most important for Priests and Religious to observe—the point at which the humility that prompts flight from and refusal of high dignities, positions of influence, undertakings to promote the welfare of others, ought to stop. "Most excellent," says St. Jerome, "is the virtue of humility, and the knowledge that of oneself one is good for nothing; but most excellent is also prompt readiness to engage in the service of one's neighbor." When once the divine will is made known to you, if you have received a definite order from the Superior whom God has placed over you, then, however strongly your humility may shrink from accepting the office, the employment to which you are appointed, give up your own will, for continued opposition on your part though it may appear to spring from humility, in reality has its source in pride. The proud man only thinks of himself; his reason may perhaps suggest to him that he is not equal to the task, and by undertaking it, he would expose himself to be put to shame in the eyes of others; whereas the humble soul only looks to God and relies on His assistance, and is fain to answer in Mary's words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word."



**THE FEAST OF ST. FIDELIS OF SIGMARINGEN.**

(April 24.)

**ON THE FIDELITY OF THE SAINT.**

Imagine yourself present at the clothing of this saint; it is a solemn and imposing ceremony, at which the Father Guardian says to the novices: "Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee the crown of life." (Ap. ii. 10.) These were prophetic words in the case of the saint whom we commemorate to-day, and for him the glorious promise was fulfilled. The crown of life shines brightly on the brow of the saintly monk, but—mark this well—he only wears that diadem because he obeyed the injunction which precedes the promise, because he was faithful, faithful until death.

**1st.** Consider that he was faithful. On two different occasions the saint swore fidelity to his God, at his baptism and when he made his Religious profession, and most faithfully he kept those vows. Contemplate him previously to his entrance into the Order, and you will be struck with admiration at his life in the world, so perfect a fulfilment does it present of his baptismal promises. He preserved his white robe of baptismal innocence pure and unstained, and advanced rapidly in wisdom and piety, so that when he presently quitted the brilliant career upon which he had entered in the world, and in taking the monastic vows for the second time pledged himself to be faithful to the Lord, he became in very deed what his name signifies, "Fidelis," one who is faithful, a monk whose single aim was to do the will of God in strict self-abnegation and exact obedience. Contemplate this model of fidelity towards God and to his sacred vows, then ask yourself: Are you faithful like him? do you also deserve the name Fidelis? Alas! where is the baptismal

innocence which you solemnly vowed to keep? How have you fulfilled your first promise? And after having at the time of your ordination, of your Religious profession vowed fidelity to your God at the hands of your Bishop or of your Superior, have you faithfully kept this second promise at least? Are you, like St. Fidelis, faithful in little things? There is nothing of more vital importance for the Religious than to bear continually in mind our Lord's words: "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater; and he that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust also in that which is greater." (St. Luke xvi. 10.) Let him remember what St. Basil says: "If the devil perceives that he cannot by his wiles thrust us out of the Order, he strives by every device within his power to deter us from aiming at perfection, and to inspire us with indifference in regard to minor things, deceiving us by the self-flattering assurance that for such trifles God's grace is not lost." But from lesser sins one soon comes to greater; remember this and be, like St. Fidelis, faithful in that which is least, and you will also, like him, be faithful in that which is greater.

**2d.** Consider that St. Fidelis was faithful until death. It was not the will of God that the saint should only be His faithful and exemplary servant within the walls of the cloister; he was to act his part on the theatre of the world as a faithful soldier of Christ, and to lay down his life for God and for the faith. In obedience to the divine will Fidelis went to Switzerland, and journeying about on foot amid untold hardships and dangers, he preached in all the towns and villages where heresy prevailed; striking success attended the labors of this undaunted missionary who feared neither the threats nor the assaults of the unbelievers. As for my life, he used to say, I have no longer any concern about it, for I have commended it to God. And when fidelity to the faith actually required of him the sacrifice of that life, he gave it up cheerfully, praying the while for his murderers. Contemplate, my soul, the death of this faithful servant of God. How sad and yet how joyful it is, how appalling and yet how at-

tractive, how ignominious and yet how grand! This glorious death is the crown of his life; faithful in life, he was also faithful in death, and dying, he went to receive the reward of his fidelity, the crown of eternal life. Would that the example of this saint might inspire you, my soul, to be faithful until death, to observe faithfully unto your life's end the vows which you as a Christian, as a Priest, as a Religious, have made to the Lord. Of what use is it to be faithful at first if afterwards you grow careless? "He that striveth for the mastery is not crowned," says the Apostle, "except he strive lawfully." (II. Tim. ii. 5.) To strive lawfully, St. Augustine explains, means to persevere in fighting to the last, and St. Jerome says: With the Christian, it is not the beginning that we must look to, but the end. Wherefore, with the help of St. Fidelis which you implore to-day, renew your resolution to be faithful, faithful even in the least things, faithful until death in the observance of your vows and you also will one day receive the crown of everlasting life.

## THE FEAST OF ST. FELIX OF CANTALICE.

(May 21.)

### ON THE LOVE OF THE SAINT TO JESUS AND MARY.

Picture St. Felix to yourself in that indescribably blissful moment when in the stillness of night, whilst praying before the Blessed Sacrament, his heart was inflamed with so ardent a glow of fervor, that overcome by the heat of that flame, the fire of divine charity, he went up to the altar where stood an image of the Mother of God with the Infant Jesus; and on the earnest entreaty of the saint the adorable Virgin bent forward and placed the gracious Child Jesus in the arms of the servant of God, who was almost beside himself with rapture and delight. Fully indeed did the saint deserve the extraordinary favor bestowed on him, on account of the fervor of his love.

**1st.** Consider that the love of the saint for Jesus was very great. When he first sought admittance into the Order, the Superior represented to him the austerity of life required by the Rule, and finally pointing to a crucifix said to him: Behold, my son, to this it is that a monk must render himself conformable. Then Felix threw himself at his feet and cried with tears: I take God to witness that I seek and desire nothing else than to lead a crucified life. It was the love of Jesus crucified that glowed in the young man's heart, and from year to year the fire burnt more brightly, the flames waxed hotter, until in the ardor of that divine charity no pain, no mortification, no castigation seemed severe enough to satisfy him. In the busy crowd that filled the streets of Rome through which he passed daily as a mendicant, the image, the remembrance of the Beloved of his heart was continually present to him, ejaculations, hymns expressing his love for Jesus were ever on his lips. Can you wonder that the Child Jesus whom he loved so ardently vouchsafed to rest in his arms? And can you wonder that when you kneel before our Lord in the tabernacle, when you are united to that same Lord in Holy Communion, you experience so little joy and happiness? Where is the love which would deserve such condescension on His part? What is the principal object on which your affections rest? Ask yourself this question, and ponder the words of the Imitation: "Blessed is he who knows what it is to love Jesus and to despise himself for the sake of Jesus. We must quit what we love for this Beloved, because Jesus will be loved alone above all things. Thy Beloved is of such a nature that He will not accept that which belongs to another; but He will have thy heart for Himself, and will sit as a King upon His own throne." (Imit. B. ii. ch. 7.)

**2d.** Consider that the love of the saint for the blessed Virgin Mary was very great. My studies, he used to say, do not extend beyond six letters: five red and one white. By the five red letters he meant the five wounds of our Lord, and the one white letter was our blessed Lady. After Jesus she was the object of his tenderest love and most

fervent devotion, to her his most earnest supplications were addressed and consequently it was from her hands that he received the Infant Jesus.

O my soul, never forget this: He who loves Jesus must of necessity love Mary also. No one can truly love the Son who regards His Mother with coldness and indifference. St. Bonaventure declares that Mary loves us more than our natural mother does, and ought we not to return her love with the fondest love of our heart? To love Mary is the same as to love Jesus, whose Mother she is. To love Mary is the same as to love virtue, for Mary is the very essence and impersonification of virtue: a living mirror of virtue. To love Mary is the same as to love oneself in a true and right sense, for the blessed Virgin knows and loves those by whom she is loved, she comes to their assistance and is ready to help all who call upon her. What measure of love, my soul, have you for Mary? To what extent do you practise devotion to her who is the cause of our joy, who can make each one of us a "Felix," a happy one? In what manner do you perform your daily prayers and pious practices in honor of Mary? Do you love her as St. Jerome would have us love her, when he says: Then only do you honor Mary aright and love her truly when you strive to imitate her with your whole heart. Ask yourself whether you do so, and learn to-day of St. Felix to love Jesus above all, and after Jesus to love no one so well as His holy Mother.

## THE FEAST OF ST. ANTONY OF PADUA.

(June 13.)

ON THE BRILLIANT EXAMPLE OF VIRTUE AFFORDED BY THIS  
SAINT.

St. Antony was only thirty-six years of age when he passed from this mortal existence to eternal life. Represent to yourself this saint lying upon his death-bed, reciting the seven penitential psalms and the Magnificat, lying there as tranquilly, as joyously as if he were about to go to a happy marriage feast, instead of into the arms of death, which mortals find so bitter. This saint's last hours resembled the last glow at the close of a summer's day, when soft roseate hues light up the evening sky as the sun sets in all his glory. For the life of the Saint was nothing else than an exemplification of the Apostle's words: "We are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men." (I. Cor. iv. 9.)

**1st.** St. Antony was made a spectacle to the world. The world did its utmost to gain the saint for its own. She lavished on him all her most brilliant and attractive gifts; she gave him high birth, princely rank, a life of opulence and ease, friends and connections in positions of influence; yet the saint did not allow himself to be allured by these advantages, he contemned the purple the world offered him and chose the humble habit of the monk. And when the world pursued him even through the gates of the cloister, when the frequency of the visits he received from parents and relatives, and the laxity of the Rule made it difficult for him to attain complete detachment from the world, he left home and country, and crossed the sea to find a refuge in the kitchen of a poor Franciscan monastery, where as a lay-brother he helped the cook, and be-

came a spectacle to the world, whose joys and pleasures, whose riches and honors he so thoroughly despised and resolutely trampled under foot. Behold and study this "spectacle to the world," my soul, and ask yourself seriously to what extent these words can be used in regard to you: "We are made a spectacle to the world." The world and the children of the world have a sharp eye for the failings of the Christian who is striving after perfection, still more of the Priest and Religious, and they are delighted to remark upon the least weak point they may discern in them. Take great care therefore that you be not a spectacle of scandal, but one of edification to the world. A monk, says St. Bernard, should conduct himself in every respect so as to edify those who see him; so that no one who has seen him and heard him talk can for a moment doubt him to be a good and true Religious.

2d. Consider that St. Antony was made a spectacle to angels. Nothing gives greater joy to the angels of God, the friends and protectors of man, than to see men who are angels in the flesh, and this sight St. Antony afforded them. Even the exterior of the saint was such as to give his fellow men the impression that he was more angelic than human. His soul was reflected in his countenance, his angelic soul, which, like a pure spirit, knew no higher aspiration than to accomplish the will of God; a soul which illumined his features with the light of a truly angelic purity, a purity inviolate, unsullied by the slightest breath of defilement. And as a further point of resemblance with the good angels, this pure soul glowed with an earnest desire to lead other souls to God. Whilst gazing attentively upon this "spectacle to angels," consider, my soul, what manner of spectacle you present to the angels, pre-eminently to your Guardian Angel. Your high calling, your glorious vocation as a Priest or a Religious is to be an angel in the flesh. As the pure spirits stand before the throne of God in Heaven, so you ought to stand before the throne of God on earth—His altar—offering sacrifice and ascribing praise to Him. Do you stand before that

altar with a clean heart, a heart pure as the heart of an angel, and can the words which Achis once said to David be applied to you, as they can to the saint whom we commemorate to-day: "I know that thou art good in my sight as an angel of God." (I. Kings xxix. 9.)

**3d.** Consider that St. Antony was made a spectacle to men. Our Lord thus exhorts us: "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven" (St. Matt. v. 16); and the Apostle says: "Let us follow after the things that are of peace and keep the things that are of edification one towards another." (Rom. xiv. 19.) Both these injunctions were literally obeyed by St. Antony. By his resplendent example of virtue he was not only a spectacle on which the world and angels gazed in astonishment, but a spectacle of edification for men. His life and labors, his word and teaching, his very bearing and demeanor, all about him exercised an irresistible influence upon those around him. He himself acknowledged this, for he observed to a Brother that by the modesty of their appearance and the gravity of their demeanor they preached eloquently to others. When he preached as many as thirty thousand persons flocked to hear him, and his contemporaries assert that the mere sight of the saintly preacher touched the hearts of this multitude with indescribable power. Such is the force of a holy example. The whole personality of the saint was a spectacle of an elevating nature, producing the same effect as that of an ancient and beautiful cathedral, which in the mute eloquence of its tranquil dignity seems to raise the soul to Heaven. Is this the case with you? What manner of spectacle are you to men? Learn of St. Antony to-day to be a spectacle to men by your good example, and ever remember that St. Bernard says: "Actual example is a practical and powerful discourse, it is a persuasive argument, a forcible incentive to attempt that which one sees to be feasible."



**THE FEAST OF ST. ALOYSIUS.**

(June 21.)

ON THE VIRTUE OF HOLY CHASTITY, AS SHOWN IN THE LIFE  
OF THIS SAINT.

Picture to yourself St. Aloysius as he lies upon his death-bed, an indescribably blissful expression lighting up his pale features, as he recites the *Te Deum* with the Brother Infirmarian, and at its close joyously exclaims: Dear Father, how gladly we shall depart hence! Whither shall we depart? his companion asks. To God, to God in Heaven, the saint answers. And well indeed might he speak with such certitude, for to him above all the words, the promise of our Lord applies: "Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God." (St. Matt. v. 8.) The holy youth truly possessed such a clean heart.

**1st.** Consider his chastity. Never did St. Aloysius sully this most delicate of virtues by the slightest breath of defilement. When he appeared before the tribunal of God, it was with his baptismal robe of innocence as stainless as on the day he received it; and no one could even look at the blessed youth without being instantaneously reminded of the words of the Wise Man in the Old Testament: "Oh how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory, for the memory thereof is immortal; because it is known both with God and with men. When it is present they imitate it, and they desire it when it hath withdrawn itself, and it triumpheth crowned for ever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts." (Wisd. iv. 1, 2.) To-day, my soul, you are invited to contemplate the confirmation of these words in the life of the saint. Dwell in thought with delight and admiration on the wondrous beauty and charm, the brilliance with which this virtue of holy chastity in particular shines forth; this virtue the praises of which may be read on every page of Holy Scripture, which the

holy Fathers of the Church vie with one another in extolling; this virtue which the saints prized so very highly, and which, according to the testimony of St. John the divine, procures for its possessor a quite special and peculiar glory in Heaven. "They sung as it were a new canticle before the throne, and no one could say this canticle but those hundred and forty-four thousand who were purchased from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." (Apoc. xiv. 3, 4.) They who are virgins, says St. Gregory, take their place with Christ upon Mount Sion, because the merit of chastity raises them to the highest degree of glory. Ought not you, my soul, to value this virtue above every other?

2d. Consider the means which the saint employed to preserve the virtue of chastity. In the first place he did not rely upon himself, for no one can of his own strength remain chaste. It was in fervent prayer, prostrate before the image of his mighty protectress, the immaculate Virgin, that St. Aloysius sought the strength which enabled him to conquer man's most redoubtable adversary, the concupiscence of the flesh; he knew full well that the voice of prayer puts the devil to flight and summons the angels and saints to the aid of the suppliant. The second means the saint employed was strict custody of the senses. It is well known that he never looked into the face of any woman; and when at court he acted as one of the queen's pages, he was not even acquainted with the features of his royal mistress. The sight of a woman, says one of the saints, is too often like a poisoned arrow, with which, if you are wounded, the venom flies immediately to the heart. Many who for years kept their chastity inviolate have lost it in a moment through an unguarded glance, through listening to words suggestive of evil. The third means the saint made use of was strict fasting and a life of penance. Nothing was too austere for him in this respect; even on his death-bed he expressed a wish to be scourged. St. Jerome says that the fiery darts of the devil must be ex-

tinguished by fasts and vigils; for, he adds, it is much better that the stomach should suffer than the soul; that the limbs should falter through weakness than that chastity should not stand firm and unshaken.

Review these three means of preserving chastity attentively, my soul, and do not rest content without resolving to put them in practice for the future; let St. Aloysius encourage you by his example to think no effort too great, no sacrifice too costly for the sake of meriting one day to share the privilege of the clean of heart, of whom it is said that they shall see God.

## THE FEAST OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

(June 24.)

### ON THE CONTRAST BETWEEN ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST AND THE WORLD.

Represent to yourself the great precursor of our Lord at the time of his entry upon his public work on the banks of the Jordan. His appearance was a remarkable and striking event. The mere exterior of the saint attested his diametrical opposition to the spirit of the world and its votaries. They love comfort and ease, luxurious dress, a good table, and here stands a man to whom fasting has become a second nature, whose garment is made of rough camel's hair, and whose place of abode is the waste, unfriendly desert. But this sharp contrast was not only external, but internal as well.

1st. Consider in the first place that John is proud where the world is humble. We know that it is usual with worldlings to play the humble, the submissive, the obedient in regard to the great and mighty ones of the earth, whose failings they term virtues, whose vices they assert to be laudable actions. The world, and those who, professing to be the servants of God, have yet imbibed

the spirit of the world, are accustomed, like the Jewish priests and lawgivers, under the pressure exercised upon them by the mighty, or in face of the impetuous demands of the excitable populace, to surrender the claims of God and of His law and in their cowardly fear of man to act against their better knowledge. For conduct such as that John was in the best sense of the word too proud. This holy pride forbade him to cast his self-respect, his conscience to the winds. "Ye brood of vipers, who hath showed you to flee from the wrath to come?" (St. Matt. iii. 7.) Such are the splendid words which the preacher of the truth addresses to the influential Pharisees. He is brought into the presence of the all-powerful Herod; will he cringe before that monarch, before whom hundreds are ready to lick the dust? "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife" (St. Matt. xiv. 4); so speaks the man concerning whom our Lord said: "What went you out into the desert to see? A reed shaken with the wind?" (St. Matt. xi. 7.) No, John was no reed, swayed by every breath of public opinion, that quivers and bends before the blast of human favor, of the spirit of the day; he is a haughty oak, that can be broken, but never bent. Meditate upon this impersonification of holy pride in contrast to the false humility of the world, and ask yourself, my soul, which do you most resemble? St. John the Baptist or the votary of the world? Nothing has had a more pernicious effect upon the Church, upon Religious Orders, upon Christian communities than this fatal compliance, this subservience, this reticence on the part of persons who are themselves pious. There are circumstances in which, if they arise, we must act the part of St. John in regard to the Pharisees and Herodians of our acquaintance, circumstances in which to yield weakly and keep silence would be a sin, circumstances in which we must speak, and speak out boldly even at the risk of bringing on ourselves contempt and dislike for so doing. And this applies mainly to Superiors in respect to abuses which have crept in, or which threaten to creep in; these they must oppose and combat with firm determination

and an inflexible will, saying with John: "It is not lawful."

2d. Consider, in the second place, that John was humble where the world is proud. "Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist." (St. Matt. xi. 11.) Such is the glorious testimony our Lord Himself bore to His precursor. All Jerusalem and half Judea went out to him into the desert, and the question was put to him: "Who art thou? Art thou the Christ?" (St. John i. 19.) Reflect, my soul, had John been proud in the sense of the world's pride, how flattered he would have been by the universal esteem in which he was held, what temptations these questions would have had for him. But here John shows himself to be truly humble; in all humility he rejects the honors that do not belong to him, and does not presume to place himself on a par with Elias or the other prophets. How utterly different in this respect is the conduct of the children of the world! Again, the great Baptist, besides humbly acknowledging himself to be unworthy so much as to loose the latchet of the Messiah's shoes, adds without the slightest shade of envy or vexation: "He [Christ] must increase, but I must decrease." (St. John iii. 30.) When was the world heard to speak in that manner? Those whom the spirit of the world holds captive will not hear of decreasing; the idea is repugnant to them. They regard rising talent, youthful energy, with envious pride, in short they look upon every one who promises to achieve greater and better things, to gain more applause and approbation than themselves, with eyes full of malign jealousy. Is not this kind of pride also found sometimes among Priests, even among Religious? Examine your own heart, therefore; ask yourself whether you resemble John in his humility, and call to mind the beautiful words of St. Gregory: "Look to it, whether when another attains celebrity as a preacher, when he is much run after and reaps a great harvest of souls, thou dost as unfeignedly rejoice at this, as if his success were thine own? If thou art not equally glad, if

on the contrary a feeling of envy arises in thy heart, it is an infallible sign that thou dost not seek God's glory wholly and solely." John sought the glory of God alone in all things, and hence he was proud when he ought to be proud, and humble when he ought to be humble. Ask yourself, is it the same with you?

## THE FEAST OF ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL.

(June 29.)

### ON THE CLOSE CONNECTION IN WHICH THESE TWO APOSTLES ARE PLACED.

Mysterious indeed are the leadings of divine Providence. The two saints whose feast we celebrate to-day were strangers to one another during the greater part of their lives, and what is more, they were antagonists, and stood in opposition to one another. For when Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, preached Christ crucified, Paul burnt with rage and hatred to the Crucified. Yet now the Church commemorates both these apostles on one and the self-same day; the sacred remains of both rest in the same city, the brows of both are encircled by the same aureola. Never does the Church pay homage to St. Peter without some mention of St. Paul, nor to St. Paul without reference to St. Peter. The two apostles are always coupled together, and the connection in which they are placed is highly instructive for ourselves. We ought to imitate both the apostles at one and the same time; as we venerate both together so we ought to take both at once as our models; we ought to combine the faith of St. Peter with the charity of St. Paul, that thus we may be perfect Christians.

1st. Consider St. Peter's faith. It is in this faith, steadfast, immovable as a rock, that we find the reason why St. Peter took precedence over all the other dis-

ciples, why he was given the pre-eminence amongst them. He was the first to confess his belief in Jesus the Son of God, and to publish His name on the day of Pentecost. If, my soul, you would wish to form a right conception of the magnitude of St. Peter's faith, think of him when, a fugitive from Judea, he drew near the imperial city, heathen Rome, the capital of the world. On the banks of the Tiber the city of seven hills lay outstretched before him in its vast circumference. Who can enumerate the thousands of marble palaces, of idolatrous temples, of statues of heathen deities! Who can count the enormous multitudes who flocked thither from all quarters of the globe! Amid all that magnificence, amongst this huge concourse of men, one Jewish refugee, poor and unknown, is soon lost to sight. Yet, O my soul, listen and ponder this with amazement; that contemptible stranger, whom you now see passing through the gates of Rome alone, without money, without position, without friends, entertains no less a project than the scheme of conquering this great city, of transforming her idol temples into Christian churches, of breaking in pieces the images of her gods, and of bringing into subjection to the yoke of the cross the millions of her inhabitants, carnally-minded as they are, devotees of pleasure and display. What an undertaking! For that faith of no ordinary fortitude is required. St. Peter possessed that strong faith. Armed with that faith he began the work surpassing all belief; in that faith he laid in heathen Rome the foundation-stone whereon the structure of the Christian Church was to be raised, and sustained by that faith he laid down his life with serene composure, dying like his divine Master upon the cross, in the utmost certitude of future victory. Reflecting upon this, who can fail to be struck with the truth of the words our Lord once spoke: "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed you shall say to this mountain: Remove from hence hither and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." (St. Matt. xvii. 19.) Great, admirable and astounding as is

St. Peter's faith, there is something no less great, admirable and astounding.

2d. Consider St. Paul's charity. One needs only to read the epistles of this holy Apostle in order to perceive how brightly the flame of charity to Christ and to man for Christ's sake burnt within his breast. Transported by the warmth of this divine charity we hear him exclaim: "Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers, nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. viii. 38, 39.) This love increased his longing for union with his Lord to such a degree that he desired to be dissolved to be with Christ; animated by this love he labored more than all the other apostles; he traversed Asia Minor, Greece, Macedonia and Italy and even journeyed to Spain; five times he—the frail and sickly Apostle—was scourged, three times beaten with rods, once he was stoned, seven times he suffered shipwreck, seven times he endured chains and imprisonment, until at length, after an apostolate of twenty years, he made the last great sacrifice of charity, being sentenced to be beheaded. If, my soul, you would form an idea, even a faint conception of the warmth of the charity which the Apostle felt for Christ's sake towards his fellow men, consider this one fact: By no one was the Apostle hated, despised, persecuted and calumniated as he was by the Jews. Yet—listen to this, for it cannot fail to astonish you—even for his bitterest foes the great Apostle entertained a love so ardent that with inconceivable generosity he declares: "I speak the truth in Christ that I have great sadness and continual sorrow in my heart; for I wished myself to be an anathema for Christ, for my brethren who are my kinsmen according to the flesh." (Rom. ix. 1-3.) Grand and yet terrible utterance! The Apostle, who loved Christ as perhaps few others ever loved Him, who longed for death only that he might be with Christ, who suffered torture and agony and had al-



ready merited a crown in Heaven, asserts that he is willing to give up that crown and to be cast away for ever, if only he could thereby save those who cursed and execrated him. O unfathomable abyss of charity! In thought immerse yourself in this ocean of charity, and if, astonished at its depth, you find yourself unable to decide which of the two is greater, the faith of Peter or the charity of Paul, let this inspire you with the determination to imitate them both in each of their characteristic virtues, to unite the steadfast faith of Peter to the ardent charity of Paul, and thus you will become a perfect Christian.

## THE FEAST OF ST. BONAVENTURE.

(July 14.)

### ON ST. BONAVENTURE AS A MAN OF ERUDITION AND OF PRAYER.

Contemplate this great saint at the moment of his death, which occurred shortly after the Council of Lyons (1274). In this council he took a most prominent part, so that he was unanimously adjudged by all present to be second in importance only to the Holy Father Himself. At the close of the council he was attacked by a mortal malady, and having received the last sacraments from the hands of the Pope, he expired calmly, his dying gaze fixed upon the crucifix. The obsequies of this learned monk, who as a Brother Minor never sought any honors for himself, were on a magnificent scale, and a splendid panegyric was delivered at his grave by the Bishop of Ostia. The saint fully merited these funeral honors, and what is of far greater moment, the holy, happy death that preceded them.

1st. St. Bonaventure was a man of vast theological learning. The Church now reveres him as one of her Doctors and as a theologian he ranks with St. Thomas as one

of the most brilliant ornaments of the schools. His erudition was of a nature to merit for him the title of the Seraphic Doctor. As it is the prerogative of the seraphs to behold God in closer proximity and to love Him with greater ardor than the other angelic choirs, so this saint united these two excellencies, superior knowledge of God with profound piety and love of God. His method of study did not consist so much in deep research as in prayer and love. "That is the source whence I derive all my science," he once said, pointing to the crucifix. "I learn Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ crucified." Hence it has been said by an eminent divine: If you desire to acquire piety and learning at the same time, make use of Bonaventure's writings, for in studying these you will feel your heart kindled with love to Christ while your understanding is enlightened by his holy doctrine. This is the only science that is not barren and unfruitful, the knowledge of the saints, such as St. Francis desired for his sons; and you, my soul, whilst contemplating the superiority of this great Doctor of the Church, may learn to appreciate these words of the Imitation, and act according to them. "Learning is not to be blamed, nor is any mere knowledge of a subject; since this, considered in itself, is good, and ordained by God; but a good conscience and a virtuous life are to be preferred always before it." (Imit. B. i. ch. 3.)

**2d.** Consider the saint as a man of prayer. Here again he is a Seraphic Doctor, teaching us by prayer to be a seraph in the flesh. As a seraph he beamed with the light of Heaven, when in the ardor of his devotion he knelt before the crucifix or before the tabernacle, for Jesus on the cross and Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament was the object on which his highest affections centred, and in the presence of his Lord the fire of his devotion emitted its brightest and highest flames. How often the Brothers observed his countenance shining with a supernatural brightness when he had received Holy Communion! How frequently he spent whole nights at the foot of the tabernacle, rising from his knees with a sigh of regret when the break of day warned him that he must part from the object of

his affection! He it was who introduced first into his Order, whence it spread to the whole Church, the custom of daily saying the Angelus at the sound of the bell. Consider, my soul, this elevating example of devotion and diligence in prayer, and by it take the measure of your own devotion, your spirit of prayer. You also are a Priest, you are a Religious, it is your glorious, your truly celestial vocation to be an earthly seraph before the throne of God in the tabernacle. How do you correspond to this high calling? Of what nature are your prayers? Ask yourself these questions, and lay to heart the excellent admonition which the saint whom we commemorate to-day addressed to his Brethren: "The most high God Himself, the blessed spirits and the denizens of the heavenly Jerusalem are waiting with earnest desire to greet us; they anticipate with longing the moment when we shall enter the courts above and share their beatitude. Ought we not to desire with our whole soul to be admitted to their company? How great would be the shame and confusion we should feel in appearing among them if we had not previously while still in this valley of tears, lifted up our souls on high, so as to be at least in spirit already inhabitants of the promised land before our journey through earth's desert is ended."

## THE FEAST OF ST. ANNE.

(July 26.)

### ON ST. ANNE'S HAPPINESS AND THE SACRIFICE SHE MADE.

What a pleasing picture is presented to the Christian's view to-day! St. Anne is seated, holding a scroll in her hands while beside her stands Mary, her dearly-loved child, the gift of God, listening to the Word of life which her pious mother is reading to her out of Holy Scripture. What a mother and what a child! After long years of bar-

renness, years of much grief and woe to her, when she had to bear the contempt even of her own servants, Mary came, like a star rising in the firmament of her parent's married life.

**1st.** Consider St. Anne's happiness. Amongst the Jews a childless marriage was a disgrace. That married people should have no offspring was considered as a sign that the curse of God rested upon their union. Hence Anne's grief at being childless was all the greater because of her piety and fervent love of God, who apparently withheld His blessing from her. How great therefore must have been her joy, how heartfelt her delight, when against all hope and contrary to human expectation, she gave birth to a child! And what a child that was! Not in all Israel was there one so sweet and attractive as Mary, she who was "full of grace"; never till then had the world beheld a child so fair and noble as Anne's infant daughter, "conceived without stain of original sin." Never had there been a maternity so rich in grace and blessings as hers, who was privileged to call the child she bore by the exalted title of "Mother of God." Well indeed may St. John of Damascus exclaim, "Blessed, three times blessed art thou, O saintly mother, in that thou hast given to the world that hallowed child, Mary, whose name alone proclaims her worthy of all honor; Mary, from whose fertile soil sprang Christ the flower of life; Mary, whose origin is sublime, whose virginal maternity is the wonder and admiration of the whole universe."

Blessed indeed is the mother of such a child! How can words describe her joy, her delight when she held the sweet infant in her arms, when she lavished caresses upon her, when she unfolded the divine mysteries to her who was full of grace! And you, my soul, whilst reflecting upon St. Anne's happiness, forget not how often you have found your joy and felicity in Mary. How often has she been to you, as to St. Anne after her long period of sterility, the "cause of your joy," how often after a protracted season of spiritual barrenness has she proved to you a source of new grace! Have not some of your happiest hours been

spent before Mary's image, kneeling in devotion at her shrine?

2d. Consider the sacrifice made by St. Anne. Imagine a merchant who after searching for many weary years, after undergoing indescribable toil and exertions has found a precious pearl, and now almost before he has thoroughly examined his treasure, and is only just beginning to congratulate himself on his success in finding what he sought, it is suggested to him that he should part with it again. Would not that be a great sacrifice to him? Or think of Abraham. Scarcely had the earnest desire of many years been granted, and a son been born to him, just as he was beginning to feel a father's pride and pleasure in the boy that was growing up at his side, the darling of his heart, the command is made known to him that he must offer up to God the only hope of his old age. This was indeed a tremendous sacrifice that was required of him. And yet it is not greater than the sacrifice which St. Anne made. Scarcely was the sweet child whom God had given to her in so miraculous a manner grown out of infancy, when the loving mother had to part with the object on whom her maternal happiness and joy centred. In obedience to an intimation from on high, she took her child to the temple and offered her to God, and in the house of God Mary spent her early youth, as one of the virgins consecrated to God. Think once more of the intense delight and happiness which the possession of this child afforded her saintly mother, and you will be better able to appreciate the immensity of her sacrifice, you will also feel yourself incited to follow in this respect also the example of that mother. There is no word more salutary, more life-giving than this word *sacrifice*. God Himself made the first sacrifice—He gave up His Son. That Son made the second sacrifice—He gave Himself for man. And following their divine model, thousands of saints have set before themselves no higher, no loftier aim than that of sacrifice; they devoted themselves with all they had and all they were to the service of God, they offered themselves as a holocaust to the Most High. Will you not imitate them? Will you

alone pay no heed to the Apostle's injunction: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God." (Rom. xii. 1.) To-day at any rate let the contemplation of the holy mother of our Lady inspire you with the necessary courage, so that before the day passes, you will have made at least some small sacrifice in honor of St. Anne.

## THE FEAST OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA.

(July 31.)

### ON FALSE AND TRUE AMBITION.

Imagine the great Founder of the Society of Jesus in his solitude at Manresa. At that time he stood on the boundary line between the world and God. A terrible conflict went on within his breast. All consolation departed from him; neither prayer nor the sacraments, neither penance nor mortification imparted relief to his troubled soul. It was a season of severe suffering, but it was the last ordeal, the fire that was to effect the perfect refinement of the gold. From the heat of this conflict the saint came forth as his book of Spiritual Exercises, the fruit of his sojourn at Manresa, shows him to us: a perfect ascetic, imbued with a thorough, a lofty contempt of the world. In order to appreciate the magnitude of the change, the completeness of the revolution that had taken place in his soul, you have only to meditate upon the character of the saint previous to his conversion.

1st. Consider how strong false, worldly ambition was within his breast before his conversion. The scion of a noble family, brought up in the highest circles of society and endowed by nature with the most coveted gifts and graces of mind and body, when a young man Ignatius

conceived an insatiable thirst for fame and glory and distinction. Whenever an opportunity presented itself of distinguishing himself, he invariably availed himself of it; nothing was too bold for him to venture upon, nothing too arduous for him to undertake if only honor and glory would accrue to him from it; to acquire military renown he feared neither wounds nor death itself. O Ignatius, how thou art to be pitied! What trouble thou didst take in the pursuit of a bubble, of a shadow that vanishes in an instant! For what else is earthly renown, earthly honor? Those who to-day speak loudly in thy praise, who to-morrow approve and applaud thee, will abuse and decry thee the day after. Think of all the illustrious names of men who in times that are past enjoyed a world-wide reputation. They are never spoken of now, other idols have taken their place; and even if they should be remembered and praised, what would it benefit them now? Their bodies have moldered in the grave, and their soul has long since received her eternal reward. This it is which is so fatal about false ambition, it robs our actions of all their merit, for he who, as St. Gregory says, seeks the favor of man as the recompense of virtue parts with what is really meritorious for a sorry price; he barter the treasures wherewith he might purchase Heaven for the transitory enjoyment of a few flattering words. Abandon this folly, my soul, as St. Ignatius abandoned it.

2d. Consider the true ambition that animated him after his conversion. The desire, good in itself, the craving of a noble nature to attain honor and merit praise was not extinguished in his breast when he became a new man, but he was animated by a higher, a nobler aspiration than before, he craved for honor and glory as much as ever, not now for himself however, but for God. The glory of God was now the object for which he strove; the motto of his life was the well-known adage: "All for the greater glory of God." That was the goal of all his exertions, of his struggles, of his sufferings. He proposed to himself as his highest aim to carry out the

Apostle's words: "To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever." (I. Tim. i. 17.) Every work he undertook, however insignificant, he commenced with God and for God, and to God he invariably offered the result, whether joyous or grievous. This being the single aim of all his actions, he frequently was heard to exclaim: What do I desire, what ought I to desire, but Thee alone, O my God! And the more strongly this true ambition, this thirst for the glory of God grew and increased within him, the more completely was his former, false ambition annihilated, so that he declined all posts of honor that were offered him, and fled from praise as from a pestilence, signing himself in his letters: Ignatius, poor in all that is good. Study attentively the glorious example of this great saint; pray him to cast one spark of his all-consuming zeal for God's glory into your heart with its miserable ambitions; resolve that from henceforth you will before and after your every action repeat the beautiful aspiration: Praise be to God, praise be to Him for evermore: *Laus Deo, semper sit laus Deo*. And with this intention let your prayer also be that of the saint: "Accept, O Lord, my freedom, my understanding, my memory and my will. All that I have and all that I am Thou hast given me, I give all back to Thee; I leave it to Thy will to do with me as Thou wilt. Give me Thy love and Thy grace; this is enough for me, I desire nothing else."



## THE FEAST OF ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI.

(August 2.)

ON THE LOVE OF THE SAINT TO JESUS IN THE BLESSED  
SACRAMENT AND TO POOR SINNERS.

Represent to yourself this great saint, who was a bishop and the Founder of an Order, at the moment when he, being still quite a young man, threw himself at the feet of our crucified Lord, and with heartfelt emotion exclaimed: "O deceitful world, I have learnt to know thee now; from henceforth I will have nothing more to do with thee." A slight injustice which he had met with in conducting a lawsuit had made so deep an impression upon the young barrister that he forthwith resolved to cease to be a counsel in worldly matters, and to become a special pleader for Christ; to dedicate all the affections of his soul to Christ and all his powers to the rescue of unhappy sinners. Love to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and love to sinners are in fact the most striking traits in the character of this saint, and these we will proceed to consider.

**1st.** The saint's ardent love for the Most Holy Sacrament. Whilst still a student his greatest delight was to kneel before the tabernacle, absorbed in devotion; the Blessed Sacrament was the theme of his first sermon, and wherever there was exposition of the Blessed Sacrament the people always wanted him to preach, since no one else could speak of this great mystery with such ardent, such enthusiastic affection. Not content with giving expression to his love for the adorable Sacrament of the Altar by word of mouth, he had recourse to his pen, and in wonderfully persuasive writings he entreated and adjured all who call themselves Christians to love above all things the God made man present under the form

of bread; to adore Him, to receive Him worthily, to receive Him frequently. When upon his death-bed he ejaculated from time to time: "Give me my God! when will my Lord come to me? Bring me my beloved Jesus"; and when the sacred Viaticum was administered to him, he exclaimed in holy rapture: "O my Jesus, sweetest Jesus, come and take full possession of my heart!" Approach in spirit, my soul, to this furnace of charity, kindle your love to the Blessed Sacrament at the flame that consumed the heart of the saint. Indeed what manner of Christian must he be, much more what manner of Priest and Religious, whose feelings towards the adorable Sacrament of the Altar are cold and indifferent? St. Catherine of Siena could not understand that it was possible for any Christians to exist without being inflamed with love to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. A saintly daughter of St. Clare once answered, on being asked how she could remain for hours on her knees before the tabernacle: "I would fain remain there for ever. Is not God really and actually present there, the same God who will be the joy of the blessed to all eternity?" And for you, my soul, a quarter of an hour is almost too long! How can you hope to be for ever happy in His presence in Heaven, if on earth you weary of it in so short a space of time?

2d. Consider the saint's great love for sinners. After our Lord, the first place in his heart was given to sinners. The principal work of his life was to promote their salvation; for this object he founded his Order, and for their conversion he composed several books which are well known. I never remember, he once said, having treated any sinner with rigor and harshness. When giving missions he frequently offered himself in public as a victim for the sins of the people. If he met with an impenitent sinner, the saint would weep over the iniquities of that stranger as if they were his own; so that one who had been a grievous blasphemer was heard to say that it was impossible for any one to return to his former sins after seeing Father Alphonsus, that eminent ser-

vant of God, weeping and doing penance for the sins of others. That was indeed being a genuine follower of the Good Shepherd, who set the first example of love for sinners. If you do but think how closely a poor sinner resembles a man who is liable at any instant to be precipitated into a yawning abyss, and who is withal unconscious perhaps of his danger, can you help feeling sorry for him? And if you reflect that sin is the greatest misfortune, that it is the misfortune for the sake of which the God of mercy came down from Heaven, can you remain unmoved at the sight of the unhappy individuals on whom this misfortune rests? Kindle then your love for sinners afresh, kindle it at the fire of charity which glowed in the heart of the saint. Pray for them, warn them, admonish them, weep and do penance for them, remembering how the great St. Augustine says: "Is your heart of iron, are your feelings of adamant, that they should not be softened, that they should not be in the least touched by those words uttered by the Almighty: Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire?" Truly we have good reason to weep, to weep continually when we think of the number of those who die daily, not the death of the body, but the death of the soul. Can we shed tears to more purpose than in lamenting with the Apostle this sad loss of souls, when he says: "Who is weak and I am not weak?" (II. Cor. xi. 29.) Hear what St. Augustine says, see how St. Liguori acted, and ask yourself, what do you do for sinners?

**THE FEAST OF ST. DOMINIC.**

(August 4.)

**ON THE SAINT AS A GREAT PREACHER.**

That was a memorable moment, and the scene must have been an impressive one when, more than six hundred years ago, the bells of the cathedral in Toulouse rang out solemn and sweet as angels' voices, and the people flocked thither in vast multitudes to listen to the wonderful preacher who proclaimed the Word of God with a force and unction till then unknown in that city, and who explained the mysteries of the holy Rosary with convincing eloquence. It is St. Dominic of whom we speak. Picture to yourself that celebrated preacher, the Founder of the Order of Preachers, whilst he is standing in the pulpit, and meditate upon the following points.

**1st.** What made St. Dominic so famous a preacher was the spirit of holiness. He was, it is true, endowed by nature with remarkable oratorical talents, but other men have had similar gifts, without making their mark as preachers. Natural gifts may have power to delight, to attract, to fascinate, but they do not touch the heart, they do not lead to amendment. Moreover the preacher's words must above all be supplemented by his example. It was so in St. Dominic's case. His very appearance was a sermon in itself; the sight of his saintly, mortified countenance, on which charity and gentleness were written, was enough to touch, to impress, to awaken emotion in the beholder. The heretics of that day, on whom the most forcible and convincing arguments urged in the formal, cut-and-dried manner of the stately controversialist produced no effect, were converted when Dominic, bare-foot and poorly clad, proclaimed to them the self-same truths. St. Augustine says that the weakness of man is so great, that he can rarely be stimulated to apply him-

self to the pursuit of justice unless he sees others practising it. Hence it is that so much depends upon the preachers of the Gospel being men of virtue, so that their hearers may have before their eyes a model for their imitation. Weigh this well, my soul. Of what avail is choice rhetoric, a good delivery, profound erudition, if your life gives the lie to your words? The reverse is also true. Your oratorical gifts may be of a mean order, your knowledge scanty, yet if you are pious and virtuous, your weak words will be fraught with no little power. "I do not require you to deliver a discourse," a Cardinal once said to St. Francis Borgia, "all I want is that you should go up into the pulpit and show yourself to the people, that all may see one who has left everything for God's sake." Thus we see that every man may preach by a good example, whether Priest or layman, high or low; but it is preeminently incumbent upon Religious to preach by this means. Are you also one of these silent preachers?

**2d.** Consider that it was the Holy Ghost who made St. Dominic so great a preacher. The saint was not actuated and incited by his own spirit, but by the Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son. The famous orator did not act on his own responsibility, but as the chosen instrument of the Most High, in conformity with the will of God and assisted by His grace. Upon that all depends. It was that which gave him irresistible power over the hearts of the most hardened sinners; people felt that God was speaking by his lips. "The conversion of souls," says the Ven. Rodriguez, "is Thy work, O God, and not ours; for what can we do towards it of ourselves, unless Thou touch the heart?" And when one of the Brothers asked the holy Father St. Francis how it was that every one wanted to see and hear him, although he was not learned, nor had he the gift of eloquence, the saint replied: It proceeds from the infinite goodness of God, who vouchsafed to cast His eyes upon me, although I am the greatest of sinners and the most miserable of all His creatures. Thus the saints invariably attributed all to the grace of God, on which their success was founded.

Learn of them. Never enter upon any undertaking without having first invoked the aid of the Holy Spirit, and consider yourself best qualified and most fully prepared for the service of God and to labor for the salvation of souls when you, like St. Dominic, can be said to be a "man filled with the Holy Ghost." There is yet one more point to be considered. Although the saint was so powerful a preacher, although his marvellous eloquence was supported and emphasized by the Holy Spirit and his own personal sanctity, yet many of his hearers remained obdurate. You may be surprised at this, but you must remember how many preachers filled with the Holy Ghost speak to you. Think of your daily meditations, your spiritual reading, the example of the saints of your state or your Order, and yet where is the fruit of all their eloquence? O forget not, it is not the preacher alone who needs the assistance of the Holy Ghost, the hearer needs it as well; and the latter ought to implore that assistance as earnestly as the former.

## THE FEAST OF ST. CLARE.

(August 12.)

### ON THE TRUE BRIDE OF JESUS CHRIST.

It must have been a strange and striking sight when in the little church of the Portiuncula near Assisi, Clare, a maiden no less beautiful than wealthy, clad in costly habiliments, knelt in the stillness of night before the altar of our Lady. The Seraphic Father was there too; he divested her of her rich attire and gave her in its place a rough, coarse robe, the garment of penance; he cut off her flowing locks and consecrated her a spouse of Jesus Christ. Truly this was a spectacle at which the world would stare in amazement, but on which the angels of

God would doubtless look with complacency. Keep this scene before your mind during your meditation to-day.

**1st.** St. Clare was the poor spouse of the Lord who loved poverty. She knew that holy poverty was what her celestial Bridegroom had chosen for Himself. Witness the stable in which He was born, the manger wherein He was laid; the hay which was His bed, while the warm breath of the ox and ass alone mitigated for Him the bitter cold of the wintry season. His whole life on earth moreover testified to this truth, for He was more destitute than the birds which have their nests, and the foxes which have their holes. Finally, He breathed His last upon the cross, the pulpit from whence in expiring He taught a lesson of poverty. No wonder then that one who had chosen Christ for her heavenly Spouse should desire first and foremost to resemble Him in His poverty. Voluntary poverty, poverty in its highest degree was in fact the fairest ornament wherewith that Bride of Christ adorned herself. She distributed to the poor all the riches that were hers by inheritance, and lived in a condition of such extreme indigence as to food, clothing, dwelling-place and all other necessities of life, that no one could fail to be struck with astonishment and admiration. A bundle of straw formed her bed, a block of wood her pillow. Three days in every week she took no nourishment at all, and she kept the fasts of the Order on bread and water. Her habit was the poorest, her cell the most bare. Contemplate attentively, my soul, this exalted type of the Bride of Heaven who has become so destitute of earthly possessions, so rich in heavenly graces; let her example inspire you with the determination to follow our Lord in His poverty according to your state in life. St. Ambrose declares poverty to be the parent and foster-mother of all the virtues. Meditate for a short time on this subject and you will perceive that a multitude of fair and holy virgins follow in the train of this Bride of Christ, humility and chastity, temperance and mortification, meekness and patience. The Order flourished as long as this virtue was the best beloved,

the one to which the precedence and preference was given by the sons and daughters of St. Francis. With the strict observance of poverty or the reverse the Order rises or sinks; upon this the prosperity, the very existence of the Seraphic Order more than that of any other Religious Community depends. It is all-important then that its members should remember and ever follow the saying of St. Clare: We pledge ourselves now and always to serve our mistress and ruler, holy poverty.

2d. Consider that St. Clare was the suffering spouse of the Man of Sorrows. If holy poverty was the partner of Christ's life on earth and His chosen spouse, suffering was the dowry He received with her, and the cross His bridal gift. The heavenly Bridegroom wears a crown of thorns, not of roses, and therefore those who plight their troth to Him can wear no more suitable wreath than a circlet of thorns. Thus we see St. Clare also in the character of a thorn-crowned bride betrothed to the thorn-crowned Redeemer. She, who was universally called the beloved of Christ, had no more fervent desire than to share in the sufferings of her mystical Spouse. Her wish was fulfilled. While still in the bloom of youth, she was attacked by a painful and incurable malady, which for twenty-eight years confined her to a bed of sickness. There she lay tortured by physical sufferings and afflicted by mental distress, both of which she bore with angelic patience. She did, it is true, sometimes open her lips to utter a complaint, but what is the nature of her complaint? Listen and you will hear of what this Bride of Heaven complains: Alas! the night is too short for me, its hours pass too quickly whilst I gaze upon the face of my crucified Saviour! What mortal ought to murmur, she said on another occasion, when he beholds our Lord hanging on the cross, bathed in streams of blood? And when the agony she endured reached its climax, she exclaimed: What a consolation it is to be permitted to suffer something for the love of Christ! Now, my soul, ask yourself what this meditation teaches you? Many a time you indulge in pious reveries, de-



lighting yourself in the thought of being affianced to Christ, entertaining sweet sentiments of attachment to Him, which you flatter yourself that you feel. If you would really and truly become a spouse of Jesus Christ, hear what your Master says to you: "Can you indeed drink of the chalice that I shall give you?" To be the Bride of Christ means to love poverty and suffering, to expect nothing but the cross here, and only to look for happiness when this life is at an end. The vocation St. Clare chose for herself is an arduous, but an infinitely blessed one; and we must unite our supplications to those of the Church, who invokes her in these words: "Hand-maid of the crucified Saviour, disciple of St. Francis, help us, that by thy intercession and assistance we may attain to everlasting joys." Amen.

## THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION.

(August 15.)

### ON OUR LADY'S DEPARTURE FROM EARTH AND HER ENTRANCE INTO HEAVEN.

Picture to yourself the universal joy, the universal exultation that fills Heaven and earth on this day. Wherever the name of Catholic is known, the jubilant ringing of bells, the glad sound of sacred song, the inspired words of Christian preachers, the devout aspirations of all the faithful throughout the whole world proclaim aloud the joyful tidings: "Mary is taken up into heaven; the angels rejoice, praising they bless the Lord." Yes, on this day Heaven and earth unite their exultant voices to greet the glorious Virgin; on this day when she quits this vale of tears and enters into the kingdom of eternal felicity. Participate in this felicity which is now hers whilst you proceed to meditate on the cause of it.

1st. Consider Mary's parting from earth. Take your

place in spirit beside the death-bed of the Blessed Virgin, and imagine that you behold the scene as tradition depicts it. Imagine that you see her lying there, the great Queen of Heaven, glorious and beautiful as the setting sun. Around her bed stand the holy apostles, summoned thither by the Spirit of God, to hear the last words of charity and of divine wisdom from her lips. A delicious fragrance pervades the chamber, sweet songs, celestial harmonies sung by angel voices echo softly through the house; the countenance of the dying Virgin is lighted up with heavenly radiance as if already glorified in the sight of men, as with holy longing she stretches out her arms to embrace Him towards whom all the desires of her soul are tending. All that usually makes death bitter and repugnant to man is absent, all here is sweet and lovely. It is not so much a death that you are witnessing, it is a visible glorification. Only think, my soul, who it is who is expiring; only think what a life is now ending, a life superabounding in graces and in merits; think what a soul is now dissolved from its earthly bonds, and you will clearly perceive that the death you behold is nothing more than a passing to the celestial marriage-feast, the return of a child to its father's house, an upward flight to God. Is it not your fervent desire that your death may be thus calm, thus holy? Most assuredly it is; why then do you not live a pure and holy life? St. Bernard says: "On this day our earth sent up a precious gift to Heaven, in order that by means of giving and receiving, the human and the divine, the earthly and the heavenly, the lowest and the highest might be brought into close alliance. For Earth's fairest, noblest fruit to-day ascended up on high, ascended thither whence the best gifts come down to us." Ask yourself what manner of fruit will go up to Heaven when you die.

**2d.** Consider Mary's entrance into Heaven. Think upon David's triumphal entry after he had conquered Goliath. With what exultation, what rejoicing he was received, what an ovation he met with! Think upon our Lord's solemn entry into Jerusalem, what enthusiasm,

what jubilation, what acclamations on the part of the multitude! Yet all that was only a faint shadow compared with Mary's glorious entry into the heavenly Jerusalem. How can words describe the triumphal reception that the angels and heavenly hosts, the patriarchs and prophets, the virgins and all the saints prepared for their Queen! Who can form an idea of the joy that thrilled through her heart, when she beheld God the Father, of whom she is the Daughter, God the Son, of whom she is the Mother, God the Holy Ghost, of whom she is the Spouse! St. Bernard exclaims in rapture: "Who can conceive the splendor wherewith the entrance of the Queen of the universe into Heaven on this day was celebrated; the loving welcome wherewith the heavenly hosts went forth to meet her and escort her with solemn canticles to the throne destined for her? If eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him, who can give any description of what He prepared for her who gave Him birth, for her who loved Him more than all the world beside? Blessed art thou, O Mary! Blessed above measure when thou didst receive the Redeemer into thy womb, blessed above measure when He received thee into Heaven." Take part to-day in the exultant joy expressed by St. Bernard; and if you are transported with rapture at the thought of the bliss upon which Mary entered on this day of her Assumption, remember that a like blissful ascension to Heaven awaits you also, provided that you have for a season, at least, stood with Mary beneath the cross on Calvary.

## THE FEAST OF ST. AUGUSTINE.

(August 28.)

## ON THE POWER OF DIVINE GRACE.

Observe the immensely high esteem in which St. Augustine is held in the Church. She honors him as one of her greatest Doctors, her most exemplary bishops, her most eminent saints; the reputation he enjoys for wisdom and learning shines with undimmed brilliance now that sixteen centuries have passed, and although no stone is left standing of Hippo, the city that gave its name to his episcopal see, the memory of its great and glorious prelate is not obliterated, and never will be while the world lasts. If you are surprised at this, and ask in wonder what it was that made the saint so great, so famous, the answer is soon given: It was the power of divine grace.

1st. Consider what Augustine was without that grace. It may safely be asserted that Tagaste, his native city, nay we may say Africa, his native country, seldom if ever gave birth to a man endowed with talents of so superior an order as the saint whom we commemorate to-day. An extraordinarily keen intelligence, a fertile imagination, strong affections, these formed the splendid dowry lavish Nature bestowed on the son of St. Monica. All Tagaste considered his father as a man to be envied for having so talented a son; Carthage, Rome and Milan gazed with admiration at the celebrated lecturer, and a corrupt world looked with wonder at the polished manners and apparently unimpeachable morals of one whose physical beauty added to his charm. But the eye of God took a different view of the paths wherein this gifted individual walked. Ponder this and learn for yourself what man is—even the most richly endowed by nature—if divine grace is lacking to him. For many years

Augustine maintained an illicit union with the mother of his son, Adeodatus; he could not see and comprehend the beauty of continency. He thirsted for empty praise and sought to obtain the favor of man—humility was a virtue unknown to him. Moreover all his brilliant mental powers did not preserve him from embracing the foolish tenets of the Manichees; he became a slave to superstition, to astrology, and he, despite the rare gifts that were his by nature, felt so thoroughly the emptiness and poverty of all around him, that once he actually envied the drunken mirth of a beggar who made merry in his cups. And when at length he saw his errors and recognized the perilous condition of his soul, when his acute intelligence perceived what ailed him, what was wanting to him, his will was too weak to enable him to rise from the snare into which he had fallen. I was like a man, he writes, who wishes to rise at a fixed time, but when the hour strikes, he has not the energy to shake off his drowsiness. Shortly before his conversion he sadly bewails this feeling of impotence. How long, he asks, how long, O Lord, is this to last? To-morrow? And again the next day? Why not act now; why should not this very hour witness the end of that whereof I am ashamed? So weak is the strongest man without the aid of divine grace. Think over this attentively, my soul, and wonder no longer why you, trusting to yourself to so great an extent as you do, make such poor progress in virtue.

2d. Consider what Augustine was under the influence of the grace of God. How speedily the nocturnal darkness of his soul was changed into the clear light of day! Under these altered circumstances he felt himself capable of doing great things, so complete was the transformation effected in him. He who was formerly incontinent, now became a model of mortification and self-restraint; he who was formerly so ambitious of honors, displayed the most admirable humility when marks of esteem were showered upon him; he who was enslaved by superstition became a doughty champion of the Christian faith;

and whereas he formerly was the ruin of many souls who were dazzled by his genius, he now became the rescuer, the leader and guide of those who had strayed from the right way. And in regard to the relationship in which he stood to God, the heart formerly given up to the world and addicted to sensual gratifications now glowed with so ardent a flame of charity, with such fervor of devotion to his Lord that all his utterances, his writings, his discourses only breathe forth love, the most glowing love, and his constant lamentation consists in this: Too late, O my God, have I loved Thee! Too late have I known Thee, O first and only fair! Look with admiration at this great saint, and admire yet more, marvel yet more at the power of divine grace, which worked in him so mightily. This eminent saint does indeed afford striking testimony to the truth of the words we read in the Imitation (B. iii. ch. 55): "O most blessed grace, which makes the poor in spirit rich in virtues and renders him who is rich with many goods humble of heart! Grace is the mistress of truth, the teacher of discipline, the light of the heart, the solace in affliction. What am I without her but a dry tree and a useless stock, fit only to be cast away?" Wherefore, my soul, prize this grace very highly; implore it of God, strive after it valiantly, and count no loss equal to the loss of grace, without which St. Augustine was so poor, and with it so rich.

## THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LADY.

(September 8.)

ON THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN AS THE MORNING  
STAR OF MANKIND IN A SPIRITUAL SENSE.

Imagine a benighted traveller, who having lost his bearings and missed his way in the darkness wanders about until at last he comes to a standstill, afraid to take another step lest he only stray further and further from the right road, or should fall headlong into a yawning pit without hope of rescue. What words can depict the delight of this unfortunate traveller, the glad sigh of relief that escapes his lips when at length the gray light of dawn, the rosy tints of morning break through the darkness of night, announcing to him the joyful tidings that day is at hand, when he will be once more in safety? This traveller represents the world, and the bright hues that herald the coming day, the day that brings hope and salvation to man, are typical of the birth of our blessed Lady.

1st. Consider that as the aurora precedes the sunrise, so Mary's birth precedes that of Christ. For thousands of years the world lay shrouded in deep gloom and nocturnal darkness. It was the darkness of unbelief and superstition, it was the night of idolatry and the worship of devils, the deep gloom of moral depravity and pagan corruption. In this obscurity mankind wandered to and fro without light, without a path, without a guide. Thousands were precipitated into the bottomless pit, and none reached the true goal of their pilgrimage. And to complete the horror of the situation, the wrath of God, which all had incurred, brooded over them like a black, threatening storm-cloud. Picture to yourself the misery of that dreadful night, and then try to realize what must have

been the gladness, the joy that mankind experienced when at length the aurora appeared piercing the thick darkness, the birth of Mary which proclaimed the near approach of sunrise, the rising of the mystic sun, Christ Jesus, and the dawn of a new day that should bring light to the benighted, unhappy world. Consequently the Church joyously exclaims: Thy nativity, O Mother of God, brought gladness to the whole world, because out of thee the sun of justice has come forth, Christ our God. St. Peter Damien declares the birth of our Lady to be, as it were, the commencement of man's redemption; and whilst meditating upon this great event St. Thomas of Villanova cries out in rapture: "O happy day, O welcome day, whereon so glorious an Advocate is given to the world! O day deserving of solemn celebration, on which so great a gift was bestowed upon us!" And as in regard to the redemption of the human race Mary at her nativity was the aurora preceding the dawn of a new spiritual day, so in regard to the individual soul she is also an aurora, since it is generally to her intercession, who is the Refuge of sinners, that each one of us owes his redemption. And not unfrequently it may be observed that the invocation of the name of Mary, devotion to Mary, having recourse to Mary, has been to the sinner an aurora, a bright gleam in the night of his misery, the precursor of the dawn of a new day for him, of reconciliation with God through Christ.

2d. Consider that Mary in her mystic beauty resembles the aurora. The rosy light that precedes the sunrise is not only fair and pleasant to behold because it is the forerunner and herald of the glorious sun, but it is in itself a sight of no ordinary beauty and attractiveness. The golden hues of early morn that gradually overspread the sky, the tender tints of purple and crimson that color the fleeting clouds, whilst trees and mountains and plants are bathed in a flood of translucent light, and the drops of dew sparkle and glisten, form a lovely sight for the eye to rest upon. So the birth of Mary is in itself a fair dawn of day, for by this happy event it was given to mankind



to boast one member, one child of Adam who could in very truth be called a child of God, one born into the world without spot or stain of sin, one on whom rested not the curse of God, but the fulness of His grace. And in this fulness of grace Mary appears as a beauteous spiritual aurora, which if not so brilliant and glorious as the sun which comes after, Jesus Christ, yet shines with the light of virtues brighter than the world had ever seen, or than the world will ever see, Christ only excepted. Thus with her bright example of virtue Mary illumined the dark world as the aurora lights up the sky. Consider this, and ask yourself whether you are also—as it is your duty, your vocation to be—by your virtues a reflection of the beams of the sun of justice, Christ Jesus? Does His image shine forth in you like the rosy light of dawn, or do the dark shades of night still hang about your soul? If the latter be the case, go to Mary, earnestly beseech her that the day may break in your soul, and that this day of her nativity may be the day of your birth in the spiritual order.

## THE FEAST OF THE STIGMATA OF ST. FRANCIS.

(September 17.)

ON ST. FRANCIS' WORTHINESS TO BEAR IN HIS BODY THE  
MARKS OF OUR LORD'S WOUNDS.

Represent to yourself to-day the marvellous and almost unparalleled occurrence that took place on Mount Alverna, when the Seraphic Father was privileged to receive in his body the impression of the sacred marks of our Lord's wounds. Imagine that you see the saint, as, inflamed with love to Jesus Christ, absorbed in heartfelt compassion for his crucified Lord, he receives the blessed signs of our redemption. It was a great grace, a favor

till then unheard of, one however, for which the saint had in a certain sense made himself worthy, as we shall see.

**1st.** St. Francis was a man of wonderful chastity and continence, and for this reason he was in some measure worthy to receive the stigmata. There is something unspeakably sublime in the wounds of Jesus Christ. They are the source whence flows our redemption, whence the life-giving streams of the sacraments issue; our Lord took them up with Him into Heaven on His glorified body, and they are the object of the tenderest love and profoundest veneration to thousands of faithful Christians upon earth. That must indeed have been a costly vessel which was honored by being made the recipient of so precious a treasure, that must indeed have been an exceeding chaste and pure body on which those sacred signs were visibly impressed! Moreover, the marks of those wounds are the tokens of extreme mortification and self-renunciation, they are caused by the greatest of all sacrifices, and consequently that must of necessity have been a body mortified and offered as a sacrifice to God, on which the supreme honor was conferred of bearing those marks betokening a sacrificial victim. In reality it was a chaste, virginal body, a body mortified and chastened to the last degree that St. Francis' soul informed; for although he preserved his chastity inviolate, he inflicted upon himself the severest bodily penances, as if he had been the worst of sinners. Having thus by chastity and daily immolation of self for some time past acquired an interior resemblance to Jesus his Lord, he had made himself worthy to become like unto Him exteriorly, and to bear in his body the wounds of the virginal Saviour immolated upon the cross. Would, my soul, that you possessed both these qualifications to receive such a distinction in the same measure as St. Francis possessed them.

**2d.** St. Francis was a man of wonderful humility and seraphic love, and this also contributed to qualify him to receive the sacred stigmata. The marks of our Lord's

wounds are signs of the utmost ignominy; it was therefore a sign of the greatest humiliation on our Lord's part to bear them, since only the worst malefactors received such wounds by being nailed to a cross. Accordingly he who bore the marks of those wounds must necessarily be, like his Lord and Master, "humble of heart"; no proud man could have been admitted to such a privilege. Francis was truly humble like his Master; he was called Francis the humble, he unfeignedly considered himself the most miserable of sinners, and knew no greater happiness than to suffer shame for Christ's sake, deeming this to be the highest joy. If, finally, the sacred stigmata is a note of the sublimest charity, of a love that gave its life for our sakes, of a love that shed the last drop of its blood, this charity must infallibly be kindled in the heart of one who bears the stigmata. In St. Francis' heart it was not simply kindled, the fire of divine charity burnt high and hotly with an all-consuming flame; his heart had long since been wounded with love to Jesus, and it may safely be asserted that when the saint received the stigmata, it did but afford an outlet to the fire that burnt within his soul. Thus Francis had to a certain extent made himself worthy of this great favor; and if you, O reader, are a venerator of this saint, nay, if you call yourself one of his sons or of his daughters, imitate him, I beseech you, in all of these four virtues; render your body chaste and mortified, the fit abode of a heart that is humble and inflamed with the fire of divine love, and thus you will reflect in your own person in some measure at least the image of Christ crucified.

## THE FEAST OF THE HOLY GUARDIAN ANGELS.

(October 2.)

ON THE THANKFULNESS WE OUGHT TO FEEL TOWARDS OUR  
GUARDIAN ANGEL.

To-day picture to yourself as vividly as you can the angel who is your guardian, whose voice you have heard so often counselling and encouraging you, of whose protecting presence you have so often been conscious, and whose loving guidance you have undoubtedly frequently experienced in the course of your life. And if in endeavoring to realize the proximity of this most faithful friend, most generous benefactor, most kind protector, your heart glows with love and gratitude, fix your thoughts awhile on this subject.

1st. Consider for what you have to thank your Guardian Angel. From the very hour of your birth until the moment when the separation of soul and body takes place, your Guardian Angel does not leave your side. Pass in review the different phases of your past life and observe how your good angel has accompanied you on every step of the perilous journey through the wilderness of this world to the land of eternal peace, just as Raphael accompanied Tobias the younger. Consider how he extended his protecting arms over you when you were a helpless infant, how his voice sounded in your ears with words of loving admonition when, a youth or maiden, you stood at the cross-ways of life; how with untiring persuasions he urged you to go to confession when you had deviated from the path of virtue; consider also how this same angel, and he alone, will accompany you on that last difficult and terrible passage from time to eternity. Think moreover how no ingratitude, no infidelity, no mis-

deeds on your part could drive this good angel from your side; how again and again when you had repulsed him and preferred before him an angel of darkness he did not forsake you, but returned to your side, in order to lead the child whom God had consigned to his charge safely to the appointed goal. Think of all this, and your heart must surely be harder than the rock, if at the sight of such love and faithfulness it does not overflow with gratitude and veneration and penitent affection in return for such tender care. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all that He hath rendered unto me?" the Priest says in holy Mass; and you will do well to put the same question to yourself to-day, and not rise from this meditation without having proposed to yourself a definite method whereby you may make requital and display your thankfulness towards your Guardian Angel. More especially resolve that you will spare him the pain of being compelled to appear before the tribunal of God as your accuser, of having to bear witness to the ill-doings of one whom he has loved so fondly and so faithfully.

2d. Consider that you can and ought to be an angel yourself. In no better way can you show your gratitude to your benefactor than by imitating his example in your life. Yes, it is your high vocation, your noble task on earth to resemble the angels. Remember, according to the teaching of many of the Fathers, we mortals are destined to fill the places of the fallen angels in Heaven. What is more natural, more meet, than that we should, to prove ourselves worthy of this great privilege, lead on earth an angel's life? Seek, therefore, to resemble the angels in your obedience to the will of God; in the fervor of your devotion and of your ascriptions of praise before the tabernacle, the throne of God on earth; in your charity towards your brethren and your willingness to render them every fraternal help and service within your power; finally seek to be an angel in the flesh by your purity and chastity. Moreover remember this: You are a Christian, or more than that, a Priest and a Religious. How frequently you approach the table of the Lord, and

what do you receive there? The Bread of Angels. Is it not just that we who are nourished by God with the food of angels should serve Him as the angels do? Does not the very expression: Bread of Angels, tell us that this is the sustenance of angels, of those who live as angels upon earth? Are you one of these happy individuals? Do you stand before the altar clothed with angelic purity, do you kneel before the tabernacle and worship the Most High with the fervor of an angel? Are you in your sacerdotal office an angel, an angel of rescue for the sinner in the confessional, and in the pulpit an angelic guide to direct the faithful in the ways of justice?

Ask yourself these questions to-day, call to mind the glorious, the heavenly task which you are called upon to perform, and beware at all costs lest you should be in the sight of God and in your intercourse with your fellow men, an angel of darkness not an angel of light.

## THE FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI.

(October 4.)

### ON THE SPOUSE ST. FRANCIS CHOSE FOR HIMSELF.

Think of this eminent saint whilst he is still living in the world; observe how thoughtful and melancholy he seems, how self-engrossed, having apparently lost all power to enjoy life as he formerly did. When his friends wonderingly ask him whether he is in love the saint, as if awakening out of a dream, exclaims: Yes, you are right, I have chosen a bride, one of nobler birth, more beautiful, more wealthy than any you have ever seen. Now this bride whom Francis loved so fondly was holy poverty, the poverty of Christ, who voluntarily stripped Himself of all the glories of Heaven and made Himself poor, poorer than the poorest upon earth. Let this dearly loved spouse of the Seraphic Father be the theme of your meditation to-day.

**1st.** Consider the history of holy poverty. Before the advent of Christ she was the forsaken daughter of Sion, sitting solitary and alone, dreaded, avoided, despised by all men. "Then"—we quote the words of the saint—"then, O Jesus, Thou didst come down to earth from Heaven to woo her for Thy spouse, in order by her, through her, and in her to produce spiritual children who should walk in the way of perfection. Poverty was present in the humble breast of Thy lowly Mother, she presided over the manger where Thou wast laid; she took part, as a well-equipped warrior, in the great conflict Thou didst sustain for our redemption. Throughout Thy Passion she alone did not leave Thee, she alone kept close to Thee. Mary Thy Mother remained standing at the foot of the cross, but poverty was with Thee on the cross, she pressed Thee ever more closely and tenderly to her bosom, in her embrace Thou didst expire. Even then she did not forsake Thee, she only allowed Thy body to be laid in a grave that was not Thine own. She it was who recalled Thee to life in the stillness of the sepulchre, who conducted Thee forth from it in triumph. Therefore Thou hast crowned her in Heaven, and it is Thy will that she should mark her chosen followers with the sign of redemption." Those who are designated as the "elect of poverty" are pre-eminently the apostles, to whose safe keeping our Lord committed this His beloved spouse; and we know that the early Christians highly valued this same spouse of Christ, for we read that they sold all that they had, "and brought the price of the things they sold, and laid it down before the feet of the apostles." (Acts iv. 35.) This spouse of Christ accompanied the martyrs on the way to execution, she dwelt with the anchorites of Egypt in their cells and caves; she was brought out of obscurity and set upon a pedestal by the sons and daughters of St. Augustine and St. Basil, St. Benedict and St. Bernard; and when once again she experienced the neglect of mankind, when she sat mourning over her departed glory, weeping over the rich estate of her faithless children, a

fresh suitor presented himself, one deeply enamored of her beauty, who would give her a higher place than any before him had done. This was the Seraphic Father. "Lord Jesus Christ," he exclaims, as if inebriated with love, "show me the way wherein to follow the poverty Thou didst love so fondly. Have compassion on me, and on my mistress Poverty, whom I love so ardently that apart from her I can find no rest." And he adds the petition: "O Jesus, surpassing all in Thy poverty, the grace I entreat of Thee is that Thou wouldst grant me the privilege of possessing poverty; my most cherished wish is to be enriched with that precious treasure." O happy bride to have met with such a bridegroom! But does that bride still deserve to be called happy? In what esteem is holy poverty held at present?

2d. Consider how holy poverty is lauded and extolled. In the Sermon on the Mount the Son of God Himself mentions it first among the beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." But He magnifies it yet more, inasmuch as He emphasizes His words by His example. The Fathers of the Church and all the saints are loud in proclaiming the praise and glory of poverty. St. Ambrose designates her as the parent and promoter of all virtues; St. Gregory asserts her to be the guardian of humility; St. Augustine and other saints state it to be their opinion that the disciples of holy poverty will, on the day of final judgment, be present at the judgment-seat of God less to be judged themselves than with Christ to judge others. Countless are the saints who are eloquent in praise of holy poverty, who in their lifetime prized it most highly, and who by the practice of poverty gained for themselves everlasting renown. The Seraphic Father is her most untiring eulogist. He terms her his lady, his mistress, and avails himself of every opportunity to extol her excellence, her beauty, her grandeur. How is it with you, my soul? You perhaps hold this much-lauded virtue in slight esteem; you may even, like the votaries of the world, rather despise than honor



her. In order to appreciate more rightly the true value of this virtue, consider the following point.

3d. The great importance of holy poverty for each individual Christian, and pre-eminently for the members of the Seraphic Order. The Fathers of the Church call our attention to the fact that the observance of poverty involves the practice of other virtues; and we ought to attach no slight weight to the knowledge that all the saints were poor, at any rate poor in spirit; that the Queen of all Saints was on earth a poor virgin, and that a poor fisherman was chosen to be the rock whereon the Church of Christ was built. St. Francis sets forth the importance of poverty in an eloquent panegyric, when he says: "O my Brothers, poverty is the treasure hidden in a field spoken of in the Gospel, it is the special path of salvation, the staff of humanity, the parent of self-abnegation, the mainspring of obedience, the destruction of vanity and concupiscence and the root of perfection, producing a rich and abundant harvest although its fruits are hidden from the eye of man." It needs but a brief survey of the history of the Franciscan Order and its various branches, to convince you how indispensable the observance of holy poverty is to its well-being; the prosperity or decline of the Order is inseparably associated with the greater or less esteem which its members display for the spouse their Founder loved so well. The solemn warning he gave his spiritual sons bears the same testimony: Holy Poverty is the vital principle of our Order; if the Brothers do not hold her fast, the disintegration of the whole will ensue; but if they keep to her faithfully and steadfastly and are pattern and example to the world, they will never be allowed to suffer want. If therefore, my soul, you desire to-day to pay your tribute of love and veneration to this great saint, you cannot do so better than by cherishing a warm affection for the virtue which he loved so ardently, and by sending up to Heaven the heartfelt petition: "Grant unto us, O God, the true spirit of charity, that we, like Thy faithful servant Francis, inflamed by divine love, may renounce the world and

all its pleasures and may practise poverty as he practised it; and may thereby please Thee and attain everlasting felicity, through Jesus Christ Thy Son, our Lord." Amen.

## THE FEAST OF ST. TERESA.

(October 15.)

### ON THE SUFFERINGS OF THE SAINT.

Listen to the words which Teresa uttered in her last hour: "O my Lord and my beloved Spouse! May the longed-for moment soon come! The hour of my deliverance draws nigh. Thy will be done! The time is near at hand when my exile will be ended, and my soul will find in Thy presence the refreshment for which it has so long thirsted!" How fair, how saintly must a soul be, that can formulate such holy aspirations in her last agony! Truly hers was a pure soul, purged from every remnant of dross like refined gold, purified in the crucible of suffering and already glorified here below.

**1st.** Consider that Teresa bore her sufferings with great patience. For the space of forty years each recurring day brought her bodily pain in addition to her mental sufferings. It may be said without fear of exaggeration that suffering, suffering in every imaginable shape was her daily companion. She endured such severe physical pain that her tongue was bitten and bleeding, her limbs almost dislocated, her body drawn and contracted, and she often lay upon her bed as if life were already extinct. For several years she could not move a step without using a crutch. Her spiritual state was also not unfrequently one of keen anguish; she was overwhelmed by a feeling of desolation and mental disquietude, until she imagined herself to be sinking into the depths of hell. Calumnies, persecutions, hatred and malicious slanders fell to her lot in no scant measure; a load of care and sorrow weighed upon her heart, but she did not murmur or complain un-

der the burden of this cross; on the contrary she rather rejoiced and exulted and exclaimed with holy rapture: "Imprisonment, persecution, torture, mockery and contempt for Christ's sake are as welcome to me as a refreshing draught"; nay, she actually besought God to send her suffering when she breathed forth the well-known prayer: "To suffer or to die, this, my God, is all that I ask of Thee." How sublime is this prayer! What must the soul have been that could thus pray! Gaze attentively into the furnace of suffering into which this eminent saint was plunged; consider what she endured and how she endured it; then perhaps a salutary sentiment of shame will overspread your soul, and after thus meditating you will perhaps be able to comprehend better than heretofore how far behind you are in the following of Christ, and what urgent need you have to lay to heart these words of the saint: "You have an earnest desire to serve God; if so, I wonder that your light cross seems to you so heavy a burden. Perchance however you will say that you wish to be freed from your suffering, in order that you may serve God better. Oh how little do we understand this mystery! In everything we do some element of self-love creeps in."

**2d.** Consider that the saint regarded her sufferings as gain. She herself was wont to say, Let come what may, the more tribulation the greater the gain. Without her sufferings *Teresa* would never have become the grand saint, the highly favored soul, the wonderful benefactress of mankind that she was. Just consider what the furnace of suffering did for her and in her. She was as pure in body and soul as the sacred flame on the altar; now when this pure gold was thrown into the crucible of affliction how beautiful and brilliant it must have become! Consider furthermore: When we suffer, we suffer on account of our sins, but when such a saint as *Teresa* suffers, she suffers like our Lord upon the cross, as an immaculate, innocent victim. But what could life offer her more sweet, more blissful than in this manner to resemble the Lamb of God, not merely in His innocence but in His Passion? Moreover consider that for four thousand years God the

Father had beheld nothing on earth so well-pleasing to Him as the Passion of His Son, the undeserved suffering that manifested such unspeakable charity, that gave such glory to God. Now we know that the angels laud and magnify God with songs of exultant joy, and man praises Him in thanksgiving for His benefits, but how few there are who, like the Son of God, raise the hymn of unceasing praise to the harp-notes of unmerited, vicarious suffering, as did St. Teresa! Praise to the Most High when chanted to the minor key of pain and woe is surely the noblest tribute that can be rendered to Him. Finally think upon this, my soul: if prayer, almsgiving, good works are subservient to the salvation of our fellow men, and obtain blessings for them, how much greater must be the power of intercessory, propitiatory suffering offered by some innocent soul on their behalf? If we believe St. Teresa to have conferred great benefits, unspeakably great benefits on her fellow men, we may be certain that by far the largest amount of those blessings were earned for them upon her bed of pain. Now at last you will be able to understand the words of the saint which we have already quoted: The greater the tribulation the greater the gain. Do you feel no desire for such gain? Let us hope that to-day on the feast of this great saint you will at least profit in this respect, by gaining a more elevated view of suffering, and more patience to bear suffering.

**THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS.**

(November 1.)

**ON THE REWARDS WHICH THE WORLD GIVES AND THOSE  
WHICH GOD GIVES.**

To-day, my soul, soar aloft in spirit to the courts of Heaven, and there contemplate the saints of God grouped around the throne of the Most High, in the enjoyment of unending joy and felicity, resplendent in glory and grandeur unspeakable, singing the divine praises, immersed as it were in an ocean of bliss. Oh how wise were they to suffer pain and loss, shame and contempt here below, since so magnificent a reward is now their portion in Heaven! In reference to this recompense our Lord Himself said: "Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in Heaven." (St. Matt. v. 12.) Fix your attention to-day upon this reward of the saints, and compare it with that which the world offers to her votaries.

**1st.** The recompense awarded by the world is unjust, that which God gives is strictly just. How constantly it occurs that real services rendered to the world pass unheeded by her, whilst merit that is only apparent is so richly rewarded that one might imagine that the individual on whom her favor is lavished had saved the whole human race from destruction, whereas he was very probably acting in the furtherance of his own interests. The Wise Man laments over this too frequent occurrence, saying: "Now there was found in the city a man poor and wise and he delivered the city by his wisdom; and no man afterward remembered that poor man." (Eccles. ix. 15.) And again: "There is an evil that I have seen under the sun as it were by an error proceeding from the face of the prince; a fool set in high dignity and the rich sitting beneath." (Eccles. x. 5, 6.) How differently God rewards His servants! He always metes out even-

handed justice; His rewards are proportioned to merit, and He allows no service to pass unrewarded. "Thou wilt render," the Psalmist says, "to every man according to his works." (Ps. lxi. 13.) He requites the cup of cold water given to the thirsty with the same justice as the heroic act of St. Nicholas who surrendered his whole fortune to the poor; He recompenses the lowly labor of the workman, conscientiously performed for the love of God, as surely as the splendid charity of St. Francis Xavier, who converted thousands of heathen to the faith. "Knowing," says the Apostle, "that whatsoever good things any man shall do, the same shall he receive from the Lord." (Eph. vi. 8.) Why then do you exert yourself so strenuously to obtain the rewards the world bestows with partiality or from caprice, while you despise the rewards God gives, which are perfectly just, and of which the saints are already in joyful possession?

2d. Consider that whereas the recompense the world gives is faulty and insufficient, that which God bestows is infinitely rich and abundant. How, as a rule, does the world requite the services rendered her? With a peerage, a laudatory address, some distinction, with money or lands or earthly pleasures. These are the things for which a man has to sacrifice the best years of his life, his health, his strength; they are indeed a sorry recompense. And supposing the world were to remunerate your services with her highest dignities, her greatest riches, what would that profit you if she did not add to them gifts which it is not in her power to give, peace of mind and health of body?—without which all our possessions are comparatively worthless. Such are the eagerly coveted prizes which the world offers—oh how differently God requites His servants! "Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in Heaven," our Lord Himself says. "I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18), so speaks the Apostle, and presently in impassioned words he depicts the reward which God hath prepared for them that love Him as something that

eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. Only compare the sorry joys and paltry possessions wherewith the world requites her servants, with the infinite joy, the infinite happiness of the beatific vision of God who is the Supreme Good and perfect beauty, and you will then understand what the Blessed Giles, who was one of those whom God rewarded, once said to his Brethren: "Trust not the deceitful world which deludes every one who relies on her, for she is utterly false. Let him who desires to be rich and great seek the eternal riches and treasures, and set his affections on them, for they never satiate or become a burden, neither do they diminish or decay."

3d. Consider that while the rewards which the world gives are transitory, those which God gives are everlasting. This one fact is enough in itself to show that the saints whom the world looked upon as fools were truly wise. For supposing that the world's rewards were as justly awarded and as rich and liberal as those which come from the hand of God, they would lack this principal quality, imperishability. Giles, the saintly disciple of St. Francis used to bid his Brethren observe how men in the world exerted themselves to the utmost and took the greatest pains and exposed themselves to no slight dangers for the sake of gaining riches. And after they had worked hard and made a great deal of money, they died suddenly and left behind them all that they had amassed by their lifelong labors. Yes, my soul, look to the end of one of these men deservedly and liberally rewarded by the world; see him on his death-bed, surrounded by all that wealth can give, at the apogee of his earthly prosperity, and you will comprehend the gladness the saints felt at having despised such an evanescent recompense for the sake of gaining that reward which lasts not thirty or sixty years, not thousands and tens of thousands of years, but to all eternity. In this one word all is summed up, and therefore the apostle says to his disciples: "This is the promise which He hath promised us, life everlasting." (St. John ii. 25.)

Rise up then, my soul, strive to imitate the saints, who in accordance with the forcible words of their great colleague, St. Paul, "counted all things but as dung, that I might gain Christ" (Phil. iii. 8), and win the just, the abundant, the eternal reward promised to those who were faithful until death. Do not grow weary of the conflict, the struggle here below; cease not to endure, to suffer in patience, remembering this passage from the Imitation: "Should not all toils be borne for everlasting life? It is no small matter to lose or gain the kingdom of God. Lift up, therefore, thy face to Heaven; behold Me and all My saints with Me, who in this world have had a great conflict, now rejoice, are now comforted, are now secure, are now at rest, and they shall for all eternity abide with Me in the kingdom of My Father." (Imit. B. iii. ch. 47.)

## THE FEAST OF ALL SOULS.

(November 2.)

### ON COMPASSION FOR THE HOLY SOULS.

To-day cast your eyes downwards into the dreary, dark, dismal abode where the holy souls are detained. Picture to yourself the condition of these unhappy members of the Church suffering, mourning and sighing in the prison where they are held captive; imagine their agonized longing, their yearning desire for ransom and release from the intense suffering which God has decreed that they must undergo for their complete purification. How deserving these holy souls are of our sincerest compassion! They are our brethren and sisters, and they are in very truth destitute and unhappy.

1st. Their poverty consists in being deprived of the beatific vision of God. Only think, my soul, what your feelings would be under such circumstances as I will now describe. Suppose yourself to be weighed down by an unspeakable affliction. There is no one into whose ear



you can, you will, pour your trouble. Then it occurs to you that there is One who said: "Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (St. Matt. xi. 28), and inspired by hope, filled with an infinite desire and longing for consolation, you hasten to the church, and approach the holy table of communion. There, to put the climax to your grief and misery, you are repulsed as unworthy of a place at the Lord's table. In such a case would you not feel yourself indeed a poor, unhappy soul, forsaken by the world and forsaken by God? All this is true in respect to the souls suffering in purgatory. After they have overcome the toils and trials of this mortal life, after they have overcome the agony of death, they would fain ascend to God, whom to behold is their most fervent desire, for whom they pant as the hart panteth after the fountains of water—and yet this God whom they love above all things repels them as unworthy to enter His presence. Unhappy, thrice unhappy souls! Abandoned by man, they are now repulsed by Him to whom they long to be united, and they know not how long the desire that consumes them like a fire will remain unsatisfied. Ought we not to feel the deepest compassion for these suffering souls?

2d. Consider how the souls in purgatory are also to be pitied on account of the terrible sorrow that tortures them. Emancipated from earth, from the things of time and sense, no longer burdened with the body, the soul now obtains a clear view of her own condition; she is now conscious for the first time of the magnitude, the heinousness of venial sin, of the imperfections which in her lifetime she hardly heeded, for these it is which have deprived her temporarily of the much longed-for vision of God; and she feels the stains that cling to her all the more acutely the more the whole beauty and sublimity of the soul God created is made apparent to her on her separation from the body. How sorry one is to see a single dark stain on a dazzlingly white garment, and how grieved the artist is to observe one trifling blot on an otherwise magnificent painting! The soul that contemplates herself

experiences a like sorrow, a like grief. Again, imagine a child who is warmly attached to his father. If he has committed some fault, not a very serious offence, but sufficiently grave to make his father so angry as to forbid the child to come into his presence or sit at table with him, how keenly the delinquent feels this punishment; and yet more painful than the punishment itself is the knowledge that he has offended his father to such an extent that he considers him undeserving of any intercourse with him. How unhappy that child is until his father looks kindly upon him again! Now the holy souls feel this contrition, this sorrow for sin, for they love their heavenly Father most ardently. Ought you not to compassionate them deeply?

**3d.** Consider how the holy souls are to be pitied on account of their helplessness. They can in fact do nothing else but suffer, suffer without consolation, without alleviation. Weigh this well. You see, when we suffer we derive comfort and a certain alleviation from the sympathy our fellow men show us, from our relatives who do all they can to help us; we find solace and succor in Christ, who gives us the Bread of Life to be our sweet refreshment in sickness and affliction. We also obtain relief from pain in sleep, at least for a short interval. But none of the holy souls are able to help one another, each one is himself as poor and helpless as can be; they can find no refreshment in peaceful slumber, there is no rest for them except that eternal rest from which they are as yet debarred, nor do they receive consolation from God, since the very thought of Him who is the object of their most ardent desire and longing only adds to their torment. Thus they are in the condition of a sick man consumed with pain, lying helpless on his bed; they are in the same condition as our Lord was when He hung upon the cross, forsaken by all men, forsaken even by God. Must we not feel compassion for these helpless souls? Only think, my soul, it is within your power to assist them in their forlorn state, those souls to whom God denies His aid, and who are impotent to help themselves; you can procure for

them a mitigation of their suffering by your suffrages, your prayers, your good works, and above all by the holy sacrifice. Do you do this? Do you perform some act of charity every day on behalf of the holy souls? Do you give them this daily alms, which it is not beyond the means of the poorest to bestow? Our Lord says: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy" (St. Matt. v. 7); if you are merciful now towards the holy souls you will in your turn obtain mercy, when you are one of the suffering souls in purgatory.

## THE FEAST OF ST. ELIZABETH.

(November 19.)

### ON THE CONFORMITY OF THE SAINT TO THE WILL OF GOD.

Listen to the words that escaped St. Elizabeth's lips on her death-bed: "Did you not hear them singing in concert with me? I sang as well as I could. I united my voice to those of the angelic choirs in proclaiming the praise and glory of God." At a moment when others are wont to sigh and groan, and utter inarticulate moanings in their last agony, she broke out into melodious, joyous songs of praise. Hers was a beautiful death, wonderful in itself, but not wonderful when we consider whose death it was. For Elizabeth's whole life was nothing else than an unceasing, unvarying song of praise to God, which rang out in equally clear, joyous accents in adversity as in prosperity, from the mendicant's hovel or the princely throne. For under all circumstances the saint maintained the most perfect conformity to the will of God. God alone and His good pleasure were the actuating motive and final aim of her life, of all she did and of all she suffered.

**1st.** Consider St. Elizabeth in the time of prosperity. Born of a royal race, tenderly loved by her parents, betrothed in early youth to a man of high rank and attractive qualities, loved and respected by all under her,

called to wear a crown, the saint had everything which in the eyes of the world constitutes happiness. But whereas the smiles of Fortune are apt to render the majority of mankind overbearing, frivolous, forgetful of God, Elizabeth never swerved from her strict conformity with the will of God, and this kept her from becoming proud, self-indulgent or less firmly attached to the law of her God. When she won at play, she would say to herself: Now that I have good luck I will leave off for the love of God. If court etiquette required her to take part in the dances that were given, she used to sit down after the first dance, saying: One is enough for the world, the rest I will forego for Christ's sake. And when she went to church wearing a circlet of gold upon her head, she used to take it off at the time of Mass, thinking in her pious heart: Far be it from me to adorn my brow with a crown of shining gold, when I behold my Redeemer's head crowned with sharp thorns. Such are the sentiments of one who truly loves God, whose love is not stifled by the thorns of wealth and earthly felicity, and not merely is not stifled, but much more, for amidst them all it produces a fair and fragrant blossom. So fervent was her devotion, so genuine her piety, so unbounded her charity towards her neighbor, that her husband bore this valuable testimony to her worth: "For her virtue and piety I value her far above all the treasures earth can offer." And when she went down from the Wartburg, the poor used to call out when they saw her approach: "Here comes our mother, who comforts us in all our troubles!" Fix your attention, my soul, in wonder and admiration on the pleasing picture this God-fearing and devout princess presents. Prosperity, which has been the chief factor in the ruin of many, which was the means of leading holy David and Solomon the wise to stray from the path of virtue, never caused Elizabeth to deviate a hair's breadth from the way of justice, from the direct course her heart took towards her God, whose will was her rule in prosperity as also in adversity.

2d. The words of the Apostle: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II. Tim. iii.

12) were to be fulfilled in Elizabeth's person, and very heavily did the divine chastisements fall upon her. You have perhaps hitherto been surprised at the happiness of her lot, now you will be no less surprised at the greatness of the misfortunes that befell her. A night dark and dismal indeed followed the bright and sunny day. Elizabeth lost the husband she loved so dearly, she lost her throne and her lands, she was driven out of the castle and forced to wander forth as a beggar, and in the biting cold of winter to seek a night's shelter in a stall where swine were kept. Calumnies and slander pursued the unhappy lady who had been a benefactress to all around her; in short, she fell into such misery and ignominy that a poor peasant woman whom she once nursed during an illness, with blackest ingratitude pushed her down into the mud. And what, think you, does the saint say in answer to this gross insult? "This happens to me now because I used formerly to wear gold and jewels." "Thy will be done, O my God," was her constant prayer in the season of affliction as it had been in the happy days that were past; in fact one knows not which was greater and more to be admired: the humility of Elizabeth as a princess, or her resignation to the will of God as an outcast and a beggar. This was the effect of that perfect accordance with the divine will which prevents a man from losing his serenity, his pious composure, which preserves him from presumption in prosperity and despondency in adversity, which makes him thankfully kiss the hand whether it be uplifted to strike or extended to bless. This it is which makes the Christian abandon himself so unreservedly to the guidance of divine Providence, that he receives benefits or chastisements from His hand with the same spirit of grateful love. How far, alas, how very far are you as yet from possessing this perfect conformity to the will of God! Let the example of St. Elizabeth serve as an incentive to stimulate you to strive at least to acquire this admirable virtue.



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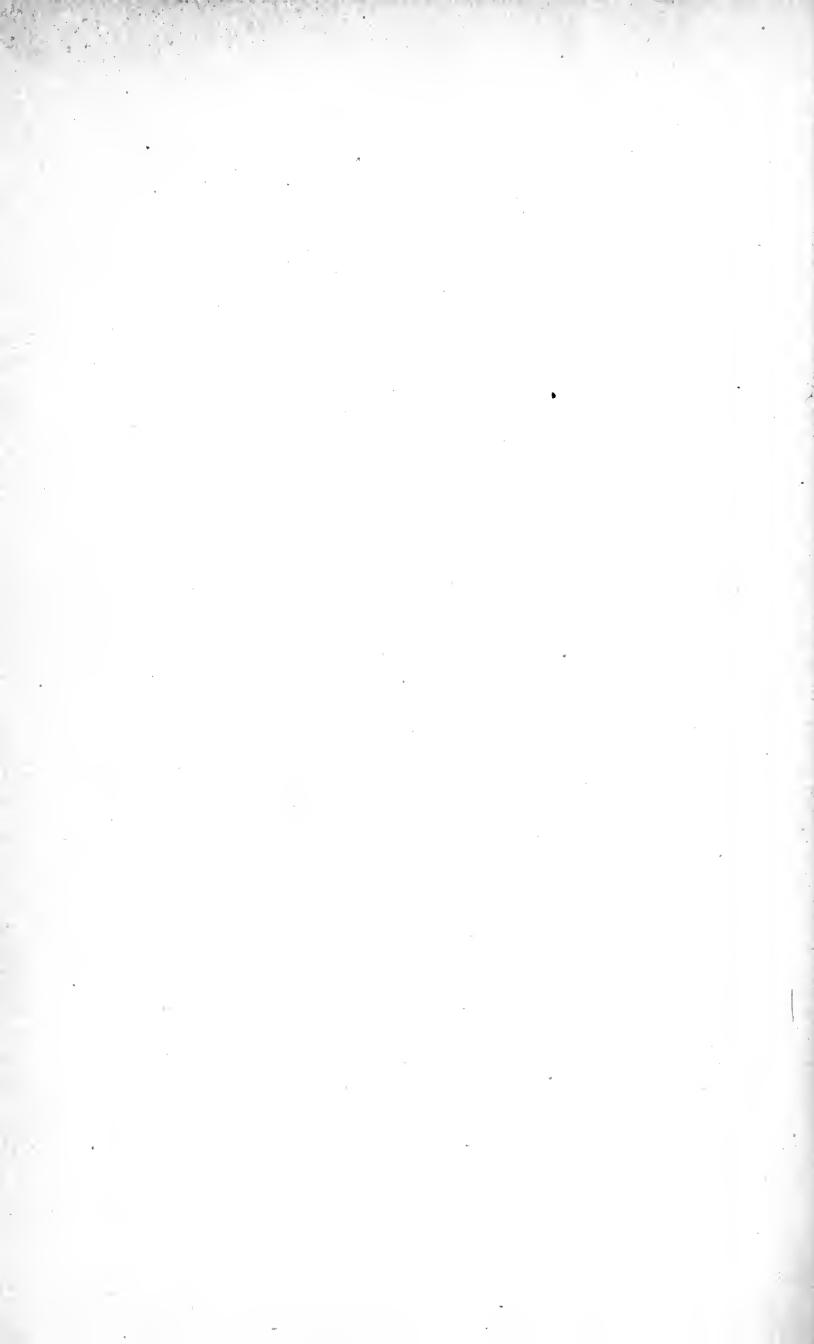
















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